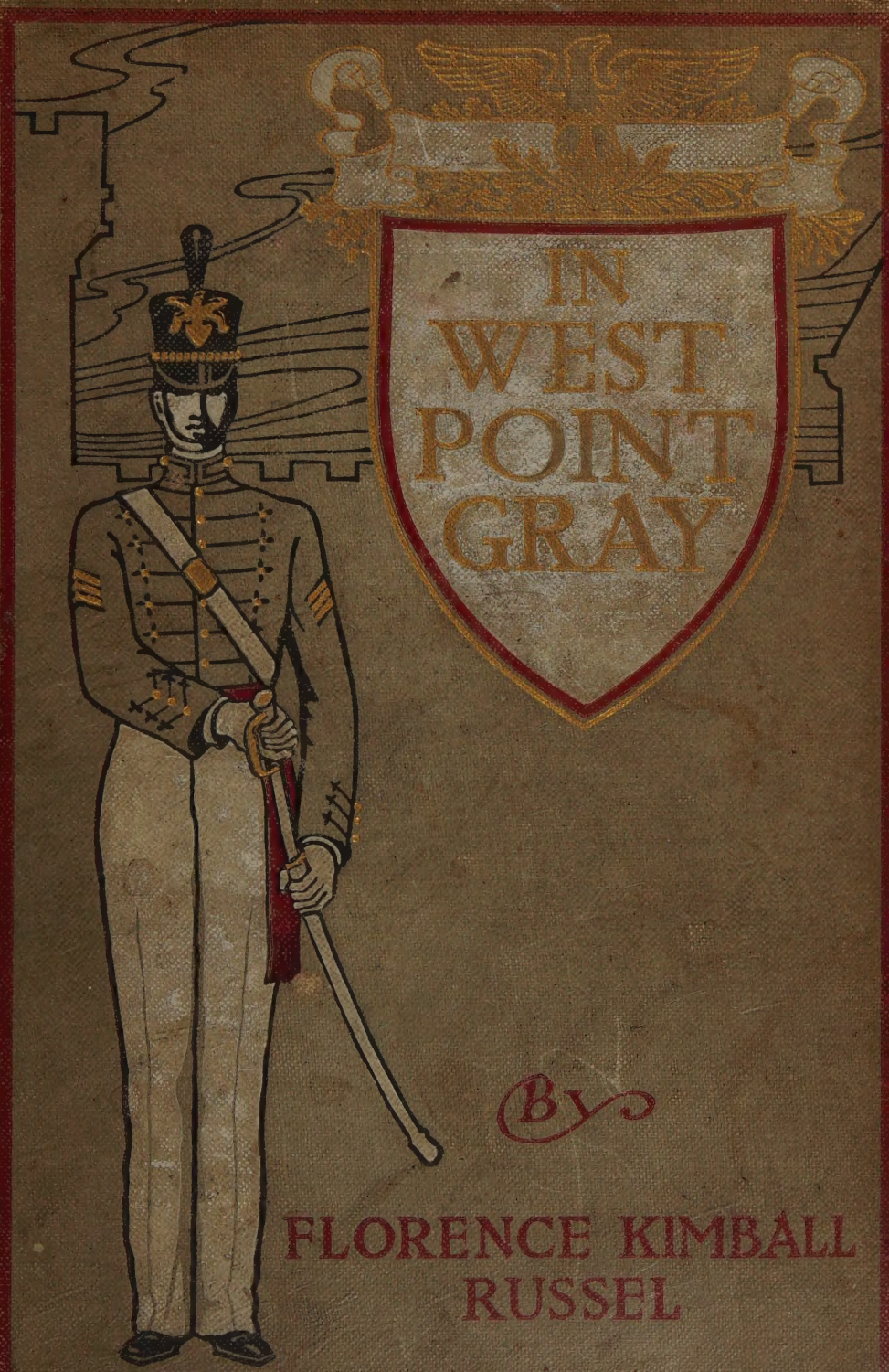
IN
WEST
POINT
GRAY
By
FLORENCE KIMBALL
RUSSEL

Roger Hall Ryan
Christmas 1908

IN WEST POINT GRAY

AS PLEBE AND YEARLING

The Boys'
Story of the Army Series

By

FLORENCE KIMBALL RUSSEL

Born to the Blue $1.25
In West Point Gray . . . 1.50

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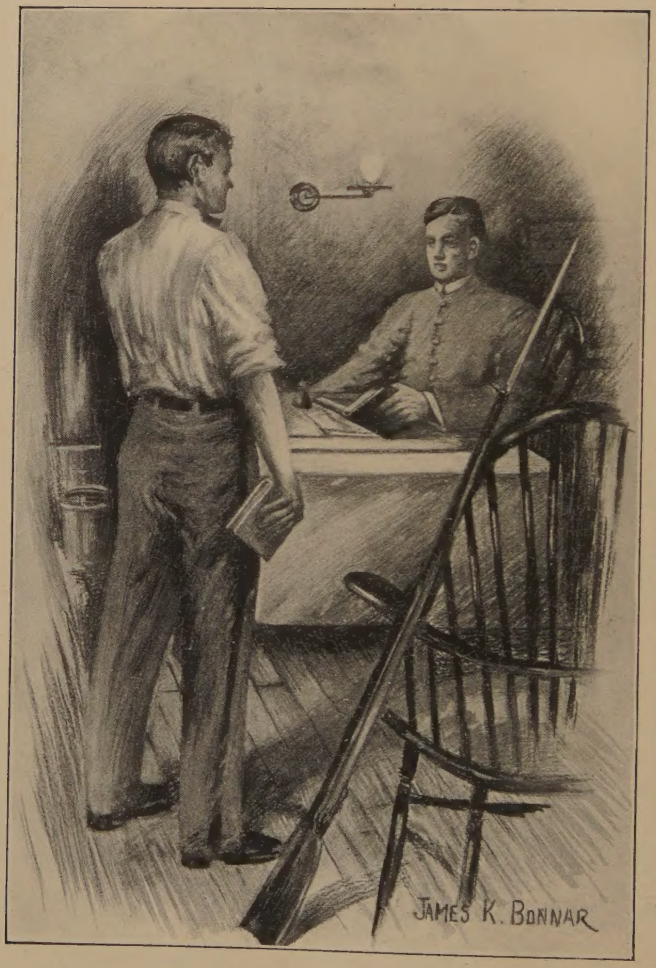
New England Building, Boston, Mass.



"WELL, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?"

In West Point Gray

AS PLEBE AND YEARLING

By

FLORENCE KIMBALL RUSSEL

Author of "Born to the Blue," etc.

Illustrated by

JAMES K. BONNAR

BOSTON

L. C. PAGE & COMPANY

MDCCCCVIII

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DEDICATED TO THE

West Point "has filled every arm of the military service with talent, efficiency, and integrity; has materially aided in successfully conducting three great wars, extending our national domain, and preserving the Union; has perpetually pushed the wild savage from our borders, and been the pioneer of our advancing civilization; has constructed and armed our fortifications, improved our harbours, lakes, and rivers, defined our boundaries, surveyed and lighted our coasts, and explored the length and breadth of our land; . . . has supplied valuable city, state, and government functionaries; . . . and, through the contributions and text-books of its graduates, has greatly elevated the scientific standard of most of the educational institutions throughout our country, and even extended its influence abroad."

From General W. Cullom's "Biographical Register of the Graduates of the Military Academy."

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IN WEST POINT GRAY

AS PLEBE AND YEARLING

CHAPTER ONE

GUARD-MOUNTING over at Fort Union, the trumpeters shrilled their way back to the guard-house where the old and new officers of the day made their inspections, verified the number of prisoners, and then reported to the commanding officer, who relieved the one from that particular duty and gave the other his instructions for the next twenty-four hours.

It was a small cavalry post in Arizona, and every one there from Major Stirling, the officer commanding, down to the newest recruit in barracks, turned out each morning at eight o'clock to witness the pretty ceremony.

"It's our theátre, circus, and Atlantic City board walk rolled into one," the first sergeant of K troop remarked as he slipped off his belts and

loosened an uncommonly tight blouse. "At other drills and parades, barrin' the ladies on Officers' Row, we're all actors instead of audience, but once a day, at least, most of us gets a chance to see how we looks from the other side of the footlights."

"Sure, and it was Jack Stirling himself that used to love the military farmations," commented a little Irishman whose bunk adjoined the door of the first sergeant's room, "and it's the truth I'm telling you, Donnelly, that I miss the lad as if he'd bin gone a year! Why, it's taken the very soul out of all our drills, not seeing his bright face looking on, and sometimes I get that black-hearted wid the loneliness that I most wish the President hadn't appointed him 'at large' to the Military Academy."

Sergeant Donnelly threw back his head with a characteristic movement, much as a restive horse might toss its mane.

"And what's our loneliness got to do with Mr. Jack's career?" he demanded truculently. "What's his father's and mother's loneliness got to do with it? Though, to be sure, you'd never have guessed to see the Major and the Major's lady sayin' good bye to the boy at the station last

week that they was a-dreadin' the separation. Thoroughbreds never shows what they feels, while curs go yappin' around all the time, thinkin' if they don't yap, folks won't give 'em credit for havin' proper sensibilities."

Observing that the Irishman's feelings were proof against this delicate innuendo, Donnelly went on still more emphatically:

"Why, bless my brass buttons, O'Rourke, Jack Stirlin' was *born* a soldier, and all but used a rifle for a rattle and a canteen for a nursin' bottle. Didn't he set up from the very first, straight as a field officer and with a chest on him just made for medals and decorations? As to how he's lived up to that chest it ain't for me to say, you-all, with the exception, perhaps, of the shave-tails that come last week, knowin' the kid as well as I do."

"Oh, young Stirling's a broth of a boy," the little Irishman put in hurriedly, "and that well braced, he can teach them cadets more 'an they'll ever learn him! Sure, he'll make the friends at West Point, Donnelly. If it was to war he was off, I'd say he'd have smiled the inimy into surrender at the cannon's mouth."

Somewhat mollified, Donnelly made answer:

"It's more than just smilin' that wins friends for Jack Stirlin', Mike," and lowering his voice a bit: "Did you ever know it was to him I'm owin' my chevrons? Well, it is, for years ago when I was a worthless private in his father's troop, without self-respect enough to hold my shoulders back or my head up, and with no record to speak of except that brought out by the court-martials that tried me, Jack he come along; and, sir, from the first the kid took to me like I was a saint masqueradin' as a sinner. He thought I was as honest and clean-minded as he was, and that I couldn't do no wrong and, bless the old eagle, if the little rascal's relyin' on me didn't begin to make me reliable."

Just here the other members of the troop, who had been watching guard-mounting, filed into the room by twos and threes, so Donnelly and the Irishman went out on the broad veranda to enjoy a quiet pipe before drill call sounded.

"Yes, sir," Donnelly continued, "the little kid's friendship taught me the lesson that trustin' folks makes 'em worthy of trust, and by the same tokin, now that I'm top sergeant of K troop I don't hold the rookies off at the point of the bayonet,

rammin' it into 'em every time they tries to parry, but I gives them a bayonet, too, and we stands shoulder to shoulder on the intrenchments sayin' 'No surrender!' to the enemies of the squadron, them things that fill up the guard house every pay day.

"You see, kid though he was, Jack Stirlin' taught me that if you really wants to help the world along it's better to overrate folks in your mind than to underrate 'em; for, like horses or dogs, people have a way of livin' up to or down to your ideas of 'em."

"I never heard before that you owed your chevrons to Mr. Jack," O'Rourke said after a moment or two of silence, "though on first j'ining the reg'ment I was given to understand you'd bin a hard drinker in your time, Donnelly, an uncommon hard drinker." He paused, to continue half shyly: "I'm glad, though, you told me about the chevrons, for it makes me understand how it was you stood by me when — when —" he floundered helplessly, "well, when I got mesilf into that scrape wid the canteen fund, you know. Things was so bad for a time, I couldn't see how you still belaved in me."

The sergeant returned the doglike look of de-

votion in the other's moist eyes with a quizzical smile.

"If I'd *reasoned* the thing out, Mike," he acknowledged, "I wouldn't have believed in you. The evidence was dead to rights against your bein' straight, but before I took the matter up to the K. O. I decided to look into it as Jack Stirlin' would have done, for he ain't the sort that drops a man from the rolls of those he likes nor reduces him to ranks without a trial, and he ain't no believer in a drumhead court-martial either, Jack Stirlin' ain't. No more is he one of these yere fellers always ready to be judge advocate and court over every one he meets. You know the sort of chap I mean, who, if he don't execute a friend out and out for some fancied wrong, cuts off his buttons and drums him off the reservation, hands tied and mouth gagged so's he can't prove his innocence with fist or tongue.

"Well, sir, that set me to thinkin' what a square sort of feller you'd always bin, and the thinkin' led to investigatin', and the investigatin', as you know, didn't end till we'd found the money, chewed and clawed up considerable a-linin' a rat's nest right back of your desk in the post exchange."

The little Irishman blew his nose loudly.

"Bless the lad's heart, Donnelly, if it hadn't bin for him and for you I might be in Leavenworth now sarving me sintence."

"Yes, and the rat would still be enjoyin' his green wall paper at the cost of fifty dollars to the post exchange," laughed Donnelly. Then he drew out a handsome gold watch, his parting gift from the commanding officer's son, with a startled:

"By the Stars and Stripes, Mike, do you realize that Mr. Jack's just about landin' on the Point now? Let me see, three hours difference in time — yes, that would make it noon there, and he was to have gone up on the day boat this mornin' to report to the Adjutant!"

And even as Donnelly spoke, and the trumpets called the little Arizona garrison to nine o'clock drill the *Albany* arrived off West Point. Near the forward gangway stood Donnelly's young friend, a tall, blond fellow, his face so transfigured by a great joy that many who caught a passing glimpse of him looked again, some with wonder and some with just a touch of envy for the glad anticipation that clothed him as in a garment.

All the way up from New York Jack Stirling

had seemed to know every point along shore, from having heard it described so often by his father and other old graduates, while each bend in the river was like a familiar face welcoming him to the Academy.

As he stepped off the gang plank the band on the forward deck struck up " Hail the Conquering Hero Comes," and Jack had smiled involuntarily and coloured a bit at the presumption of his own thoughts, for he could not but feel it was an omen that he would pass the coming examinations with flying colours and vanquish every difficulty in the four years to follow.

Up, up the long hill he climbed, this, too, being symbolic of the climb from plebe June to the June of graduation, and at every step his pulse leapt higher to meet the glorious thought that he had really arrived at the Mecca of all his boyish hopes. To one side of him stretched the Hudson as blue and unruffled as the sky above it. On the other side a precipitous cliff tumbled down from the hills beyond and halted, sentinel-like, on the brink of the dusty road.

At last Stirling reached the Administration Building, remembering with a smile the old story of the western plebe who reported to the dignified

Superintendent with a breezy, "Say, Mister, that there hill of yourn's a breather." Far below him lay the Hudson, and to his left were a row of officers' quarters, the Hospital, Mess Hall, and Academic Building; and, yes, that vine-clad structure he had passed at the bend of the road must be the Riding Hall, while over yonder through the trees were the Chapel and Library, with a glimpse between them of the cavalry plain and distant camp.

Everything looked exactly as Jack Stirling expected it to look. It was the same old West Point of his father's day, the West Point for which he had been preparing himself since childhood, and surely his father's Alma Mater greeted him in her tenderest mood, perhaps recognizing that here was stuff for the making of an officer and a gentleman.

Just then a slender young fellow, whom Stirling had noticed on the boat, dragged wearily into sight around the bend of the road. He was stooped, narrow chested, and rather sallow, but withal young-eyed and eager. On reaching the top of the hill he stopped as Jack had done, to look down on the Hudson between its green banks, and, though breathing rather hard from the climb,

he turned impulsively to his companion with a murmured word of admiration.

Jack liked him at once.

"I say," he began boyishly, "I noticed you on the boat coming up. Are you a candidate too?"

The other's thin face lightened with a smile to match Jack's own, and putting down his heavy suit case he held out a hand in greeting.

"That 'too' of yours makes me more than glad to know you, Mr. — Mr. —" he stopped confusedly.

Stirling mentioned his name and wrung the outstretched hand with a heartiness not to be mistaken.

"And I'm John Raymond of Missouri," his companion went on in a tone which indicated that like Paul of Tarsus he felt himself a citizen of no mean city. "I'm sorry we didn't meet on the way up," he continued, "but I was so busy studying for the coming examinations that it's a wonder I knew when we finally reached West Point."

"I don't see how you could have buckled down to work on a day like this," Stirling laughed, "or are you already 'boning' to stand one in the class?"

Raymond promptly disclaimed any such ambition, and went on to say that having heard by chance of the competitive examination in his district he had taken it at an hour's notice. To his own great surprise he had won the appointment, then managing to scrape enough money together, he had come on to West Point for the finals. Stirling would understand that he felt obliged to work in season and out, for naturally he didn't want to fail at the examinations, especially as he had given up a good business opportunity to complete his education at West Point free of cost, his University course having been cut short several years before by his father's death.

During this recital the army boy's eyes widened in amazement.

"Then you just came to West Point because you couldn't afford to go to another college?" he gasped. "You never heard of the place before last month? You don't expect to go into the army when you graduate? You don't *want* to? Why, I've been preparing myself for this appointment all my life, and if I fail —" the muscles around the firm mouth quivered, "if I fail I'm going to enlist. I couldn't be happy out of the army."

This time the civilian stared.

"I can't imagine a lazier life in time of peace," he said thoughtlessly, "and in time of war any able-bodied young man would offer his services to the country. I understand, though, on graduating from West Point it isn't necessary to join the army unless one wants to. My congressman assured me of that before I took the competitive examination."

Not *necessary* to join the army! His congressman had assured him of that! Jack Stirling, to whom the army meant everything in life, grew very red, started impulsively to say something that would teach this civilian what a mistaken idea his was. And then, because criticism was quite foreign to his nature, so quick to see the good in others, so slow to realize their faults, he held his peace; while Raymond, quite unconscious that there had been even a momentary suspension of their friendly relations, went on to say that he "reckoned" the instruction at the Military Academy was about as good as he could have had at the University, if only they didn't waste so much time on drills and parades and exercises.

Waste time on military evolutions of any sort! It is a marvel Jack Stirling survived the shock. Was it possible, he wondered, that a Providence

who had the army's welfare at heart could let anything so unsoldier-like pass the first examination? Was this the stuff officers were made of? Why, he might be a member of the Peace Commission; a living, breathing flag of truce; a man who knew no utility for a sword except to turn it into a plowshare.

If Raymond had declared himself a pickpocket, a swindler, a thief, or a highwayman the army boy could not have been more scandalized, but as usual he bridled his tongue, and through the rose coloured glasses of optimism tried to see Raymond not as he was, but as he ought to be.

Perhaps there was the making of a soldier in him after all. One never could tell. Stirling remembered that in the old days some of the most unlikely "rookies" turned out to be the best cavalrymen. There was Dodson of E troop who spent most of his first year in the guardhouse, when he called a sudden halt on himself, passed through all the non-commissioned grades, and finally was made a lieutenant in the regular service, developing into a most efficient officer and one of Jack's best friends. Even nearer home was the "kid recruit" of his father's own troop, a worthless youngster, apparently, until taken

in hand by Sergeant Donnelly, when he quickly developed into a rattling good soldier and won his spurs within a year. There was Donnelly himself, dear old Donnelly, who had worked up from a no-account private in the rear rank to the first sergeant of the troop, and this despite his lack of education.

Early in their talk Raymond had said he was twenty-one, while Jack, who would be nineteen on his next birthday, topped him half a head and outweighed him by twenty-five pounds. How stooped the boy was, too, how narrow chested, how pale. Desk work, thought Jack, and yes, Raymond had said something about being in business for himself, which proved him a fellow of considerable resource, despite his lamentable ignorance of that most noble institution, the army.

Just then a hotel omnibus, crowded with laughing girls, passed them. Behind this conveyance came a broken down carriage from the local livery stable. It was drawn by a hacked and dispirited horse, the whole outfit being in marked contrast to the solitary occupant of the landau, a tall, distinguished looking fellow, dressed in the height of style and sporting a monocle. His

luggage, piled on the top of the carriage, was covered with foreign labels, and on the end of a suit case Jack noticed the initials " T. W. W."

Turning to Raymond he said carelessly:

" There goes another of the class, for if I'm not mistaken that was Tom Winthrop of Washington. I didn't see his face, but the initials on the suit case are his, and I'm sure there's but one checked suit like that in the world, and Winthrop introduced me to it at his father's country place day before yesterday."

" You don't mean to say that was the son of the Secretary of State? " Raymond breathed in an awed voice.

" Why, yes," answered Jack indifferently, and wondered at the other's incredulous amazement, for politics meant to the boy from the West what army meant to the one born in the service.

A moment later they parted at the Administration Building, Jack Stirling to make his presence known at once to the Commandant, who was an old friend of the family, John Raymond to report directly to the Adjutant.

CHAPTER TWO

It was late afternoon when Jack finally left the Commandant's quarters, his hostess having to be told over and over every bit of news pertaining to the little garrison in Arizona, and especially that relative to the Stirling family. Moreover, Jack discovered in the young girl visiting there a playmate of the old Montana days, Marie Harding, the daughter of the regiment's former colonel. She proved to be a jolly, companionable sort of girl, whom Jack found it hard to reconcile with the beruffled little person he remembered, and at the luncheon that followed close on his arrival, they had many a hearty laugh over their reminiscences of nine years before, the Commandant and his wife bringing up several incidents that might otherwise have been forgotten.

"You've grown somewhat younger than I remember you," Marie had laughed on first greeting Jack, "for I always used to think of you as a contemporary of my father's, and was never quite sure when he returned your salute so sol-

emnly on the board walk, whether you were really a captain in the regular service or just a little boy dressed up in soldier clothes.

" Then, too, the fact that you didn't go to the post school, or even to the dancing school, convinced me you were made of different stuff from the rest of us, and I used to watch your military formations from a distance, perfectly willing to have sacrificed my family of dolls and joined the regiment even as 'Full-private, Number One in the awkward squad!' "

Jack laughed.

" I had no idea you were so martial in your tastes," he excused himself, " or I might have offered you a commission in the regiment, even though you were a girl, and such a very little girl."

" Marie's only a year younger than you are, Jack," put in the Commandant's wife, " and while she was small for her age you will have to admit that she's made up for lost time once she really started to grow."

Almost as tall as Jack himself, and with a fine carriage of the head and shoulders, Marie Harding was undeniably handsome. There was about her an almost boyish absence of affectation, a refreshing directness of manner, and an air of good

comradeship that appealed to Stirling immediately. In fact she was just the sort of girl a fellow would have liked for a sister, and before luncheon was over they were the best of friends, and Stirling wondered why they had not known each other better in those far off Montana days.

Altogether his visit to the Commandant's was so homelike and pleasant, that the boy felt a pang of regret he must forego the friendly intercourse once he had reported to the Adjutant for, with his father, he felt it would be better to cultivate no old acquaintances, nor make any new ones on the post until after he had " shed his plebe skin " the following June.

All this he confided to the Commandant's wife, Marie having gone out on the wide veranda to entertain a lot of yearling callers, and the Commandant's wife, understanding West Point customs, acquiesced after a compromise on an occasional Saturday evening supper with nobody else invited, unless it should be a classmate or two of Jack's own.

As they discussed the coming examination and Jack's chance of passing, the light talk and laughter on the veranda floated in through the half closed blinds to where the candidate, grown

a little uneasy, waited for the yearlings to take their departure before he could be about his own business; for army boy that he was, he realized it would be considered a great breach of plebe etiquette to be caught doing " social stunts " his first day on the post.

" I'm afraid you'll have to let me out the back way," he said at last to the Commandant's wife, " for I must get to the Adjutant's office by three o'clock, you know." But even as he said it, the veranda chairs were pushed aside with a thunderous racket, and the gray-coated, wasp-waisted young fellows said good-bye, one reminding Miss Harding not to forget his band concert, another clamouring for a walk after guard-mounting in the morning, and still another referring to dances she had promised him at the next hop.

Jack, watching his opportunity to slip out unnoticed, thought they would never go, but at last the gate shut behind them, and aided and abetted by the Commandant's wife, who was shaking with suppressed laughter, he darted through the half-open door, only to run pell-mell into a fresh batch of yearlings trooping up the broad steps.

Even then everything might have gone well if Marie Harding, in all innocence, and very happy at having her new friends meet this old friend, had not stopped him in his mad flight and insisted on introducing him to each and every one of the yearlings. Brimming over with amusing stories of Jack's boyhood, the girl assumed in a gracious little way all her own, that she was sure the yearlings would make it pleasant for Mr. Stirling in plebe camp, that gentleman meanwhile being covered with a confusion so patent that the Commandant's plump wife straightway retired to the cool darkness of the drawing room, where she gave herself up to unrestrained mirth.

Naturally the yearlings were charmed to meet Miss Harding's old friend, and after his embarrassed departure begged to know more of his early life and achievements. So Marie, nothing loth, told them everything she could remember, even to the fact that he had once been chased by Apaches and barely escaped with his life.

What more she might have evolved from her too accurate memory is not known, for the Commandant's wife, still rather red and breathless, came out on the veranda and changed the topic of conversation; while Jack, hurrying toward the

Administration Building as if again pursued by hostile Indians, suffered in anticipation the hazing he would have to undergo in plebe camp because of Marie's inadvertence.

At the Adjutant's office he found an old-time friend in Captain Richards, who well remembered the boy's martial ambitions years before at a frontier post, where his own small son Dick, now a Yale freshman, had "played soldier" with Jack on the reservation back of the garrison.

"He's as well set-up already as most yearlings," thought the Adjutant, his eyes resting approvingly on the alert young figure before him, "and of course, being Jack Stirling, he reported himself properly, the only man among them that knew how to stand at attention or had the least idea what to say! It's seldom that a cadet comes to West Point as high-minded and manly and courageous as he leaves it, and I am wondering if Stirling's influence over the plebes will not be as great as that of the yearlings themselves."

Then the Adjutant ran his eyes perfunctorily over the papers handed him by Stirling, asked a few official questions, gave him a sealed envelope, and dismissed him curtly, though a queer little smile ambushed itself behind his moustache, as

the boy faced about and made for the door without a sign of recognition.

Used to the customs of the service, Jack Stirling, in reporting officially to his superior officer, had not presumed upon their friendship of many years' standing, but was as uncompromisingly military as if the Adjutant had been a stranger, and the Adjutant, to test him, had not shown by even a look that he remembered the boy perfectly.

In like manner Stirling registered himself across the hall, turned over his money to the Treasurer, and passed his physical examination at the Hospital. Then came the ordeal of meeting the cadet officers in barracks, but here Jack's military training stood him in such good stead that even the young martinet in charge had no fault to find with him, while the cadet corporal who escorted Stirling across the area of barracks to his room, did it with a certain official courtesy of manner, very unlike his treatment of the other plebes.

Up three flights of stairs they marched to a " plain room " in the fourth division, where after a few orders as to his future conduct, Jack was left alone. For a moment he stood there, still maintaining the position of a soldier, but his heart beat rapidly at the thought that he was really at

West Point and in barracks — "beast barracks," to be sure, but if he passed the mental examination, as he fully expected to, he would soon be a full fledged cadet in West Point gray.

From his window he could see the camp across the cavalry plain; a long stretch of parade ground, green as a well kept lawn; the Professors' Row with its air of quiet dignity; and beyond the guns of Trophy Point the Hudson, stretching out between its verdant banks. To the right of Trophy Point on the veranda of the West Point Hotel he could distinguish the flutter of light dresses, and this side the hedge a sprinkling of gray-coated figures twinkling in and out among the trees.

The hedge which separated camp from the hotel was a tall one, and many generations of graduates had tried to jump it on that last glorious charge across the cavalry plain, tradition having it that this graduate or the other had accomplished the feat; but however that may have been, it was well known that each class had some reckless spirit that tried to do it, did luck give him first or second choice of horses. Among others, Jack's father attempted the jump, and in consequence received his diploma the next day on crutches, notwithstanding which, Jack, as he stood there in "beast

barracks," not only jumped the hedge in imagination, but the four years intervening as well.

Meanwhile Stirling's new found friend, John Raymond of Missouri, had gone through what seemed to him a bewildering amount of red-tape at the Administration Building, the Hospital, where he took his physical examination, and the Treasurer's office; after which, through a mistake on his part, he started towards Cadet Barracks without waiting for the half dozen other candidates who had reported with him. Men of all sorts and conditions they were, from Riggs, a navy boy thoroughly presentable and sure of himself, to big Bayard of Kentucky, provincial, uncouth, a red-faced martyr to his first high collar, and doing penance for many bare-foot days in shoes so tight that he could scarcely walk in them.

Crossing over from the Administration Building, Raymond, absorbed in his own thoughts, ran full tilt into two gray-coated figures, or to speak more accurately the cadets, at some little trouble to themselves, bumped into Raymond.

"A thousand pardons," murmured one of the young gentlemen with affected concern, "I trust most earnestly we have not inconvenienced you?

No? I'm so glad! If I mistake not you are a candidate for admission to our — er — happy home?"

Raymond, who had heard many tales of the horrors of West Point hazing, nodded a startled acquiescence and was about to speak, when the younger of the two men cut in with a brusque:

"Of course he's a 'beast,' Bonnaffan, can't you tell it to look at him?"

"But his home paper refers to him as a leading young citizen of the town," protested Bonnaffan, "and confidently predicts that he will rank his class at West Point, notwithstanding he has to contend with a hundred young men picked from among the best in their communities all over the United States!"

Raymond flushed guiltily, for in his pocket at that moment was a clipping from the "Argosy" which said those very things about him, and how was he to know that every candidate had a similar eulogy carefully folded away among his belongings or else left as a legacy to the relatives at home?

"He's a handsome, well-bred fellow," murmured the older of the two cadets in a tone calculated to make a man of any spirit long to knock him down, and then in a still lower tone, as one talks of a child before its face, he continued:

" From even one look at that noble brow, Graham, I'm sure our young friend is predestined to be yet another Grant or Sherman or Sheridan. There is unmistakable genius in those soulful eyes, while his whole manly bearing but confirms my belief that we have before us a major-general in embryo; unless, indeed, after the examination he decides, like Cincinnatus, to return indignant to the slighted plow."

Raymond, trembling with rage, started to make some kind of rejoinder to this baiting, but the other cadet cut in with a sharp:

" Have you reported yet, Mister? "

There was a warning note in the question, and Raymond replied somewhat sulkily that he was even then looking for the person to whom he should report.

" *Person!* " howled a scandalized voice, " person, indeed! Do you realize, my esteemed young friend, that you are speaking of the Adjutant of the United States Military Academy, and that he has been detailed to that exalted position by His Excellency the President? "

This last was sententiously mouthed, rather than spoken, and Raymond, a little awed in spite of himself, hastily explained that he was not

referring to the Adjutant as, in fact, he had already been to that gentleman's office, and was about to report to the cadet officer detailed to receive candidates.

" So it was the cadet officer you referred to as a 'person,' my poor misguided young friend," put in the milder of the two men, his very mildness having a sinister note that Raymond felt more keenly than the frank incivility of the other. " You will doubtless be asked to explain why you spoke so slightingly of him, once you are admitted to his presence, sir. And now, as we are going in the same direction, 'twill be a mournful privilege to see you to your doom! "

On the way to barracks it developed from skilful questioning on the part of the younger cadet that Raymond was from Missouri, and had attended the University there three years before. The mild mannered man affected great pleasure. It was possible Mr. — er — Raymond, was it? — knew a chum of his at Columbia graduating the next June.

Raymond, homesick as he was for anything pertaining to his native soil, was off his guard in an instant.

" I'm sure I know him," he answered, flushing

with pleasure, "for that was my own class. What is your friend's name?"

The mild mannered man looked at him coldly.

"It is not customary at West Point, Mr. — er — Hammond — Raymond — whatever your name is — to catechize an upper classman on any subject. That is his province, not yours. It is incredible that a man of your seeming intelligence cannot answer a simple question without first asking one, but I shall overlook your bad military manners and once again ask if you know my friend?"

Raymond felt insulted.

"No, sir, I don't!" he snapped crossly.

The mild mannered one was milder than ever.

"How do you know you don't know him?" he queried in his softest voice.

Raymond was growing nervous.

"I don't know I don't know —" he stammered, "that is, I don't know that I don't know — er —" but the mild mannered one interrupted with a sneering:

"No, at present you *don't* know that you don't know, Mister, but in about five minutes you'll know you don't know anything!" whereupon the

two cadets disappeared behind a closed door on which was a sign in large characters:

(1) SEE THAT YOUR COAT IS BUTTONED AND ALL SUPERFLUOUS ORNAMENTS ARE REMOVED OR COVERED.

(2) TAKE OFF YOUR HAT AND LEAVE IT OUTSIDE.

(3) KNOCK AND WAIT UNTIL INVITATION IS GIVEN TO ENTER.

(4) AFTER ENTERING, STAND AT ATTENTION.

(5) DO NOT SPEAK UNTIL YOU ARE SPOKEN TO.

(6) ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS PROMPTLY, BRIEFLY, AND RESPECTFULLY.

As Raymond stood there reading these instructions, the half dozen other candidates were brought over from the Adjutant's office by an orderly, and Raymond regretted the misunderstanding that had sent him on ahead of them, for like the proverbial worm that was up betimes, he had been caught by the early bird.

"They are worse than I imagined in my wildest dreams," he confided to the young fellows gathered anxiously around him. "You wouldn't credit how insulting they can be! It's ten to one

I'll have a fight on my hands before the day is over."

"Oh, no, you won't," put in little Riggs, the navy boy. "You've got to stand their hard talk and harder treatment, for if you fight once you'll have to fight a hundred times. Of course you wouldn't be expected to take a personal insult, but there seems to be no trouble of that kind here."

Little Riggs spoke with authority, his brother having graduated at West Point the preceding June, and as Riggs himself had spent six months at the Naval Academy, what that young gentleman did not know about both institutions was not worth knowing, in his own opinion, at least.

"But it's all so grotesque," complained Raymond, "especially to one accustomed to the freedom of western civilian life."

Riggs grinned delightedly.

"Already you're beginning to speak of yourself as no longer a civilian, Raymond, and after a week or two of the discipline here you'll forget you ever were a civilian, and will look back on your little encounter this morning as a mere bagatelle."

"But — but what will they do to us?" stammered an undersized, anemic looking boy who had

been listening to the conversation, his eyes and mouth wide open, his thin shoulders drooping dejectedly forward. "I didn't suppose I was coming to anything like this. My congressman didn't give me a hint of the sort of place it was. I only knew that I was to get a good education free for nothin', and so, bein' 'physically and mentally qualified for the position,' I come. But before I agree to stay, I want to know what they're goin' to do to me?"

Riggs looked into the pinched, ugly face of Sampson from Tennessee, and laughed.

"Well, you needn't be afraid they'll spoil your beauty, Sammy dear," he said consolingly, at which the general gloom seemed to lighten a little, though a moment later he plunged them all into darkness again by remarking that somebody ought to beard the lion in his den.

No one seeming anxious to play Daniel, Riggs volunteered to go first, drawing his forehead down into comical furrows as he read the notice aloud. When he came to the third requirement, "See that your coat is buttoned," Raymond gave an apologetic little laugh.

"But they couldn't expect me to button this sack suit," he ventured. "See! It isn't made

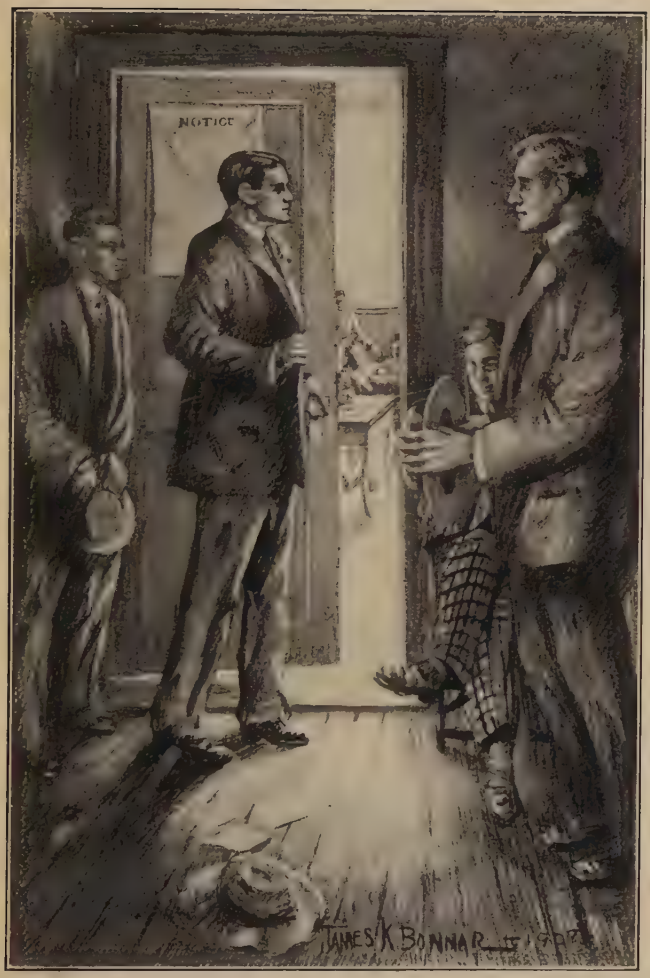
to button," and he drew the smartly cut garment across his chest with absurd effect.

As he spoke, the door was suddenly opened and the younger of the two cadets who had accosted Raymond appeared on the threshold. There was a momentary glimpse of several gray-coated figures lounging around in comfortable attitudes, and then the door closed sharply.

The cadet looked around him with quizzical eyes.

"It appears to me that you young gentlemen are rather deliberate about reporting," he began, and catching sight of Raymond: "As you were the first to arrive on the scene, Mr. Raymond, I should advise you to be the first to report, or you may hear something not altogether to your advantage." Then the shadow of a smile crossed his handsome mouth as he concluded:

"I regret exceedingly, gentlemen, that official duties prevent my being present on this auspicious occasion!" and with a twinkle of brass buttons, a gleam of spotless white trousers, and the swish of a long-tailed dress coat, Cadet Corporal Graham was down the iron flight of stairs, three steps at a time.



"TURNED THE KNOB WITH A MOST UNSTEADY HAND."

CHAPTER THREE

So it happened that John Raymond was the first to cross the threshold of that Bluebeard's chamber to the candidate. With a final look at the printed directions and a heart whose excited beating was well nigh audible he gave a timid knock on the dread door, and at the gruff " Come in," turned the knob with a most unsteady hand. In his trepidation he had forgotten to leave his hat outside, and at the same instant that his heart, by a wild leap, told him of his error a dozen voices shrieked it in chorus, commanding him further to take that hat outside instantly, and not to enter before he could do so properly.

Retreating in all haste, Raymond deposited his hat on the floor, nor did one of the awed plebes give way to even a ghost of a smile as once again he entered the room. Not deeming it necessary to knock twice, Raymond started in the second time without the preliminary rap, only to be met on the threshold by louder yells than ever, which told him in various keys that he must always

knock at a superior officer's door and await permission to enter. Also, would he kindly tell them why he had come into the presence of gentlemen without buttoning up his coat?

Straining the nobby little garment across his chest and knocking gently at the door, Raymond made his third attempt to bridge the distance that separates the citizen from the soldier, and this time more successfully; though even then they objected to his clothes, the way his hair was cut, the fit of his collar, the fact that he wore a stick pin in his tie, the colour of his soft shirt, the make of his boots, and above all else the fact that he had dared to come into the Military Presence with a flower in his buttonhole.

Meanwhile he had been made to stand perfectly erect, with eyes straight to the front, hands rigidly at his sides, and shoulders thrown back almost to the breaking point, the Gray Coats gathered around him in a menacing half circle.

At one side of the room sat a tall, handsome, square-shouldered cadet busily writing, and apparently unconscious of Raymond's presence or the bedlam of noise around him. He bore a distant resemblance to Will Faulkner, whom Raymond had known at the University, and with

a sudden leap of his pulses the boy remembered that Will had a brother at West Point, and as he had entered the year Raymond left Columbia, it would put him in the present first class.

Obeying the injunction to keep his eyes straight to the front, Raymond had an oportunity to study the clear profile and closely cropped brown head, which seemed more and more like Will Faulkner's with every minute that passed, the sight of a face familiar in resemblance only making him realize keenly how homesick and miserable he was, and how utterly out of touch with his surroundings.

But the Inquisition was at work and he must answer questions promptly, or face the consequences.

" What's your name? " asked one of the Gray Coats.

" John Raymond," answered the boy, flushing sensitively at the manner in which the question was flung at him.

" John Raymond, *what?* " yelled the Gray Coat. " Don't you know enough to address your superiors as '*sir*,' Mr. Raymond? Remember in the future to always add that title of respect whenever answering questions at West Point.

Also, nobody cares to know your first name. You are *Mr.* Raymond from now on. Do you understand, Mr. Raymond? "

" Yes, *sir*," answered the boy with what to one who knew him well would have indicated a rising temper, but the Gray Coat seemed mollified.

" Now once again, what's your name? " he asked, and this time so much more pleasantly that the boy was reassured.

" Mr. Raymond, sir," he flashed back with a sudden smile of comprehension that showed he would soon learn to accept the hazing in good part.

But smiles are not regulation, and Sir Gray Coat was annoyed. He frowned heavily and brought his face within an inch of Raymond's.

" Wipe off that smile! " he hissed savagely. " I'd like to know why you're flinging your teeth in my direction. When I want you to look at me in that tone of voice I'll order you to do it, and meanwhile you're to keep your risibles under better control. Understand? You're to grin on order only. See? " Raymond both saw and understood, but failed to add the necessary " sir " when communicating this new found intelligence to the Gray Coat, whereupon there was another

outburst of wrath and another long catechism wherein the answers were invariably concluded with the compulsory title of address.

At last this stern inquisitor gave way to a second Gray Coat, the mild mannered cadet Raymond had met on the way to barracks, and his suavity and condescension were more offensive than ever. Among other things, he asked Raymond where he was from and this notwithstanding he had already been told. Raymond bit his lip.

"From Missouri, sir," he answered with the sullen look in his eyes of an animal teased almost beyond endurance.

"Missouri!" echoed the Gray Coat. "Missouri! Well, couldn't you have chosen a better state than that? Though I'm sure if you can stand hailing from the corn and hog belt, we ought to be able to put up with it, too. Only it argues such very bad taste on your part, Mr. — er, Raymond, isn't it? — that I'm afraid even a course of instruction under our professor of Art will never give you the proper values of perspective and proportion. Think of owning up unblushingly to coming from Missouri!" he appealed to the others.

John Raymond, high-tempered, hot-headed,

impetuous, marvelled at his own forbearance. That he should stand there silently and hear Missouri reviled was almost unbelievable. But he clenched his jaw hard and pinched his lips into a thin red line, waiting — waiting.

At last a third Gray Coat broke in upon the incredulous amazement of the second gentleman, who was still effervescing with remarks not altogether complimentary to Raymond's native state.

"Do my ears deceive me, Mr. Raymond," he began, "or did you really say you came from — But, no! It is not fair to judge a man without allowing him a word in self-defence, so once again in all kindness, I ask, where are you from, Mr. Raymond?"

Choking with rage, the candidate managed to blurt out a second time that he was from Missouri, sir.

The Gray Coat looked at him commiseratingly.

"It's worse than a hunchback," he whispered in an audible aside to one of the other cadets. "Do you suppose the Adjutant realized he was from Missouri when he reported himself this morning?" and turning to Raymond, he said more gravely still:

"I'm sorry for you, Mr. Raymond. In fact you

have the sympathy of the whole Corps, for of course you couldn't help coming from Missouri. It's your misfortune, not your fault. Still you must learn to pronounce the name of your miserable state correctly. It is called Mizzoura on the stage and in dialect novels, not Missouri — Mizzoura, do you understand? Now once again, where are you from Mr. Raymond?"

For one perceptible second John Raymond hesitated, then he dug his nails into the palms of his clenched hand, drew a long breath, and faced his tormentors squarely.

"I'm from *Missouri*, sir," he answered doggedly. "*Missouri*, sir!"

Instantly pandemonium raged. A plebe, no, worse still, a conditional plebe, a candidate, "a beast," in the parlance of the Point, had dared to question the majesty of military law. He had wilfully disobeyed an order given him by a superior. He was insubordinate, in cadet language "B. J." It was unheard of, monstrous, inconceivable.

Raymond, pale but determined, stood his ground. He would do anything in reason that they wanted him to do. He would look straight ahead and not at the person addressed. He

would stand like a manikin in a shop window, head up, shoulders back, hands at his sides, feet turned out at an angle of sixty degrees. He would do everything prescribed in the regulations. He would even abide by the absurd customs of the place. He would accept these striplings as his superiors and treat them accordingly. He would do everything — anything — except call his native state by that absurd misnomer. It was not only undignified, it was sacrilegious, as if they had changed his stately mother's name of Sara to Sal. He grew paler at the thought, and his stubborn jaw hardened as he clenched his teeth together.

How he hated the Academy! How he scorned those silly boys with their stiff, unnatural attitudes, their exaggerated ideas of their own importance, their childish methods of hazing. Why, he was a grown man, twenty-one his last birthday. He had been in business for himself. In his own community he was a person of no small power and position. He had even voted, and his opinion was valued at the town councils, though who would have thought it to see him now at the mercy of these howling youngsters, the butt of their feeble jokes, the target of their immature wit.

Despite his incendiary thoughts, Raymond kept the prescribed military attitude which he had been forced to assume at the outset, and if anything he held his head a trifle higher, his shoulders squarer than ever, for he felt exalted, carried away by his own enthusiasm, as if he were defending the good name of his mother, and he thrilled at the thought that they could kill him before he would dishonour his native state to suit their perverted sense of humour.

Mizzoura indeed!

The uproar grew in volume, and still Raymond stood there motionless, unconscious alike of their attempted witticisms or their threats.

Suddenly he felt himself drawn into a corner of the room by the tall, distinguished looking man he had noticed on first entering, the only one there who had not joined in the chorus of denunciation.

"Mr. Raymond," he began in a low voice, but one that was singularly quick and decisive, "a little word of advice from one Missourian to another."

A Missourian! Then he probably was Faulkner's brother, after all. Raymond flushed with delight at the thought.

" You must remember you are now under military discipline," went on the low voice quietly. " So obey whatever you are told without question. Later, if you feel you have been asked to do something unworthy, there is a higher authority to whom you can appeal. It is evident you are a loyal Missourian, Mr. Raymond. That argues you are probably a loyal American, as well, and a loyal American with military training makes a good soldier. But the first step towards being a good soldier is to obey promptly and without question."

What a new way to look at it all, and from a Missourian, too! Raymond flashed a grateful smile at the man beside him, but before he could speak the older cadet went on, an unmistakable ring of authority in his voice, low pitched though it was.

" No thanks, please. I just wanted to save you from making a fool of yourself, that's all. Why, man alive, the yearling that made you so huffy is from Missouri himself. He's a Caldwell County fellow. I shouldn't trouble to tell you this except I hear from my brother, Will Faulkner, that you and he were chums at Columbia. He asked me to look out for you, and — " the low voice trailed off, to ring out suddenly with a sharp:

" There now, do what I say, and do it quickly! " The change was so sudden and the voice so peremptory that Raymond jumped in spite of himself, not having noticed, as Faulkner had, that the other cadets were gathering around them. Again Faulkner's voice rang out:

" Shoulders back, Mr. Raymond, heels closer together, head up. Ah! that's better. And now once again, Mr. Raymond, where did you say you were from, sir? "

There was not a glint of kindness in the face, no indication that a moment before he had spoken in the most friendly way. Still, the boy seemed to understand. Hazing at West Point differed from the hazing he had experienced at the University. There it was badgering, pure and simple. Here it spelled the first principle of military discipline.

Then, too, Faulkner himself was a Missourian, and he had said that the cadet who incensed Raymond so bitterly but a few moments before was a Caldwell County boy, so of course he had meant no disrespect to the state. Raymond felt in a shamefaced way that he had had heroics over nothing. It was all part of the West Point life, a unit in the integral of discipline. Yet he had taken himself as seriously as did that actor men-

tioned in Nicholas Nickleby, who whenever he played Othello blacked himself all over.

Once again Faulkner spoke, and this time his voice was like one about to order a military execution. Ready! Aim! Fire! Though what he really said was:

"Well, Mr. Raymond. We are waiting. What state are you from, sir?"

"From — from Mizzoura, sir!" came the answer, and to his surprise Raymond had to bite his lips to keep from laughing outright at the incredulous expression on the face of the Caldwell County boy. But he stood awkwardly stiff and straight, his little fingers on the seams of his trousers, his eyes straight to the front, his shoulders thrown back as he had never held them in all his twenty-one years.

"Yes, you're from Mizzoura, Mr. Raymond," resumed his interlocutor, "and we wish it understood that if in the future one of your superior officers should tell you to call your native state — well, say Mizzoo, it must be done. Do you understand, Mr. Raymond?"

"Yes, Mizzoo — I — I mean, *sir*," stammered Raymond, and so won the nickname that clung to him throughout his stay at the Academy.

A few more questions respectfully answered, a few more rules on military etiquette repeated parrot-like, a few more uncomplimentary remarks on his gait, his carriage, the way he held his head, and John Raymond of Missouri, very red, very stiff as to shoulders, his chin and stomach drawn in unnaturally, his chest thrown out so that the sack coat strained at its one button, walked past the other candidates on his way to the quarters assigned him on the third floor of the eighth division in barracks.

Accompanied by Cadet Corporal Burnham, he looked neither to the right nor left, but out of his starboard eye he saw the other candidates watching him wonderingly, and grinned within himself as he heard the door close upon little Riggs.

A moment later he was shown to a small, ill-lighted room overlooking the area. Its furniture consisted of two iron beds, separated by an alcove, a wooden table, a clothes-press, and two chairs, while the one window, though spotlessly clean, was innocent of even a shade.

The cadet corporal restrained a smile as he saw the dismay on the plebe's face.

"Well, Mister, you don't consider this room

good enough for you, I suppose?" he inquired sarcastically. "Yet it was occupied by distinguished generals in their day. What did you expect, may I ask? Lace curtains? Oil paintings? Louis Fourteenth furniture?"

Raymond flushed uneasily. He was not quite sure if the tirade needed an answer or not, but the cadet corporal evidently expected no reply, for he continued to rage like the Biblical heathen, ending up by showing Raymond how he must stand at attention the moment one of his superior officers entered the room, and how quickly he must obey the order for candidates to turn out promptly, in addition to which he was instructed not to go near the window or into the alcove, this leaving a space about ten feet square as neutral territory.

When finally left to himself, Raymond, completely exhausted, fell into one of the straight-backed chairs and a slough of despond at the same time. Down dropped the tired shoulders, the tight coat unbuttoned of its own accord, and he was really beginning to enjoy his misery when, with a sudden swift movement, the door burst open and in stepped the corporal again.

Raymond, fumbling at the button of his coat,

was on his feet in no time, but not quickly enough to suit the young martinet.

"Don't be so slow!" he stormed. "Here! Do it like this." And in a flash the gray-coated figure was in the chair and out of it, standing attention with the easy grace of a year's practice.

Clumsily enough, in all conscience, poor Raymond tried to imitate his instructor, who finally left the room muttering scornfully at the other's "grossness."

Again Raymond fell back into his chair and gave himself up to the luxury of melancholy. He had not dreamed West Point was going to be like this, and he hated the place as he had never hated anything in all his life. He knew now what the politicians meant when they referred to the Academy as a hot-bed of aristocracy, for there was small danger that the son of the Secretary of State, or any other influential fellow, would be treated as he had been. Yet he had the best blood of the South in his veins, though only Faulkner knew it.

Thinking matters over in his bare and cheerless room, Raymond swiftly arrived at the conclusion that he was a much abused person, and on a wave of loneliness and self-pity he was fast being swept

into an ocean of homesickness, when a loud noise in the hall and a sound of hurrying feet made him spring to attention again, buttoning up his coat with feverish haste.

Nearer and nearer came the footsteps, and with beating heart and burning cheeks Raymond realized that there were two men this time instead of one. The unfairness of it all gripped at his throat. He felt he had suffered enough humiliation for one day. He thought they might have left him alone for at least half an hour.

The footsteps hesitated farther down the hall, and then came on again, this time stopping at his very door.

Raymond gritted his teeth hard and braced manfully, his little fingers on the seams of his trousers, his eyes straight to the front.

CHAPTER FOUR

In a moment the door had burst open, to be closed again with a resounding bang, and another individual, buttoned up to the neck in a coat not intended to button, and with a wild look in his eyes, confronted Raymond.

For a full moment these two stared at one another, speechless. Then Raymond, still standing at attention, burst into a gale of laughter in which he was joined by his companion, for it was no other than little Riggs, also stiffly braced, and mechanically saluting.

"Oh, Riggs, Riggs," gasped Raymond, when he finally caught his breath, "if you could only see yourself! Did you think me a third classman?"

"That I did," returned Riggs cheerfully, "or you may be sure I wouldn't have saluted you so respectfully. But on the other hand you might have been a wooden Indian in front of a tobacco store. Where did you accumulate that brace? It's positively awe-inspiring."

Raymond unbuttoned his tight coat, and

slipped into one of the two chairs, indicating with a hospitable wave of the hand that Riggs was to occupy the other, after which, with considerable gusto, he proceeded to relate his experiences of the morning.

Riggs listened with enthusiasm, for Raymond had the gift of story telling in no small degree, while as a mimic he was inimitable. But laugh as the Missourian might at his own misadventures, he still smarted under what he considered the injustice of it all, and could not conceal from little Riggs how much his pride had been hurt.

"You take yourself too seriously, old man," Riggs had said at the close of Raymond's story, "and as long as the cadets see that ridicule galls you, you'll be ridiculed."

Raymond laughed somewhat unwillingly.

"I know I'm over-sensitive," he acknowledged, "but I can't help it, Riggs. If Faulkner hadn't said what he did, I believe I'd have let them kill me before I'd have given in!"

Riggs nodded.

"A fine trait when the object happens to be a great one, but pig-headed when it's about a small matter such as this."

He saw Raymond's sensitive face quiver, and

launched into a witty description of his own treatment at the hands of the third classmen. Raymond noticed there was not a trace of resentment in Riggs' manner, only good humoured amusement, and he envied the boy his easy going disposition.

Among other things, the yearlings asked Riggs if, in common with the rest of his class, he expected to come out one at graduation, and the navy boy had scored a point, in his own estimation, at least, by replying that he couldn't answer for the *rest* of the class.

"Then they asked me my views on hazing," continued Riggs, encouraged by Raymond's interest, "and I told them it seemed to me a form of moral vaccination, that we were inoculated by a 'B. J.' virus to procure immunity from 'B. J. ity,' or at least to mitigate the attack. At which a cadet corporal spoke up and said that in spite of their precaution in vaccinating me I seemed to have acquired a case of varioloid, and he thought I ought to be quarantined.

"Well, I snickered right out then, for it reminded me of an old darkey at my grandfather's home in the South, who described an epidemic of small-pox in his family by saying that though

the authorities had canteened and assassinated the children, most of them had broken out with celluloid. Of course the whole gang jumped on me after my snicker, and I was bidden in every key to 'wipe off that smile,' 'stop making a laughing hyena of myself,' 'swallow my teeth,' and 'stand at attention.'

"Then a cadet corporal, I think his name is Connelly, ordered that I tell my superior officers what had amused me; so I told the story, and though I did it in my best style and with such a strong southern accent that any one with imagination could have smelled the fried chicken and corn pone cooking, they didn't so much as flicker an eyelash, simply stood there as if waiting for the point. Finally one of the first classmen borrowed a handkerchief from his neighbour and proceeded to weep softly on another friend's shoulder, because he found the story so sad, showing as it did the terrible state of ignorance among the natives of Tennessee."

"I know that man," interrupted Raymond excitedly. "Wasn't he sort of pasty and white with an oily manner?"

"Your description sounds more like boiled

macaroni than a man," laughed Riggs, "but I think it suits the gentleman in question."

Just then the door was opened a tiny crack and Sampson of Tennessee stuck his head around it.

"Isn't this the south area room on the third floor of the eighth division?" he inquired easily. "Them young fellers in uniform told me to bring my things up here," and he flung down a carpet-bag near the door and stooped to tie his shoe-string which had come loose.

Riggs and Raymond stared at each other incredulously. Finally Raymond spoke:

"Didn't they give you any — er — er — "

"Instructions?" put in Riggs hastily.

"Why, no," answered Sampson, looking up, "they only asked my name, and where I was from and then assigned me to this room. I told 'em, too, how you'd bin' kiddin' us, Riggs, and they jest laughed. They called me Mister all the time, and was as polite as you please. One of 'em in particular, a rather large, pale gentleman, was especially nice, and promised to make it pleasant for me in camp."

Riggs murmured something that sounded

strangely like "Macaroni," and then asked gently:

"Were you the last to go in and report, Sampson? Yes? I thought so."

Raymond still looking mystified, Riggs explained:

"You see they had no time to instruct Sampson, so we must tell him just what they told us, that he may make no mistake when a superior officer comes into the room."

Whereupon little Sampson was "instructed," Raymond adding to the fun, for Sampson was so delightfully guileless that he even believed a "brace" meant to throw the body as far backward as possible on the hips instead of as far forward, while the "salute" taught him brought the thumb so nearly on a straight line with the nose that it was anything but respectful in character.

At last the long expected step came down the hall, and before the door could be thrown open to admit a dignified figure in gray, Raymond and Riggs were on their feet, as they had been instructed, while little Sampson sought the shelter of the prohibited alcove, from where he alternately bowed with his hand on his heart, or per-

formed the salute imposed upon him by his graceless classmates.

The cadet corporal stared in amazement, but before he could demand what all the nonsense meant, little Sampson, his voice quivering with earnestness, began to sputter something about "Hail to the Chief," at which the yearling, choking with laughter, fled incontinently.

A moment later at the order "Candidates turn out promptly," the guileless Sampson tore down the iron stairs of barracks at his room-mates' heels, and got into line with such celerity that he all but knocked his neighbour down. Once there he proceeded to "Right, left, right, left," on his own account till a scandalized cadet officer took him in charge.

"They're good fellows, those plebes on the third flour of the eighth division," Cadet Corporal Graham announced several evenings later to his room-mate and a couple of visitors, "though the finest specimen of 'plebe corporal' in the bunch is that army boy, Mr. Stirling, you know. Quick and snappy in his speech, well set-up, and splendidly muscled, he takes to it all like a Newfoundland puppy to water. 'Where did you learn the exercises?' I asked him at drill this morning.

'Been to a tin soldier school, eh?' 'No, sir,' he answered, red as the lining of an artillery cape, 'I was born in the army, sir,' and he said it with just enough hesitation to keep it from sounding B. J., and yet at the same time I felt from what he'd left unsaid that he knew his tactics from cover to cover."

The gentleman resembling macaroni looked up quickly.

"Don't count too much on Mr. Stirling," he advised, "for if I'm not very much mistaken he needs disciplining more than any one else in his class. Why, he had the impertinence to call at the Commandant's his first day on the post."

"He did?" snorted Graham incredulously. "That *was* fresh! But who told you so, Bonnaffan?"

"Mitchell and Scott and Stansbury. They were calling on Miss Harding, the army girl visiting there, and as she was new to West Point customs and had known Stirling in Montana years ago, she was very gracious, treating him quite like an old cadet and telling numberless stories of his 'bright boyhood.'"

Graham was properly disgusted.

"Well, if he's that kind, we'll have to sweat

it out of him in plebe camp and, by Jove, if we can't do it through hard drilling — and he's too tough for that! — we'll take it out of him in other ways. There's that young Winthrop, too! He's an awful cad — "

"Oh, no," interrupted Connelly, who was sharing Graham's room in barracks, "Winthrop's all right, Bob, and he's the son of the Secretary of State, you know."

Graham threw out his hands significantly.

"Much good it does a fellow at West Point to be his father's son, though Winthrop isn't on to that fact yet, and won't be able to draw a cap at the commissary to fit him, simply because he's so puffed up over his dad being in the Cabinet. And 'gross!' Why, I wager he'll handle his gun like it was hot, for his joints are so stiff that they creak in the setting up exercises."

"But, Graham, he'll get over that, you know, and family does count for something. His mother, for example, was a Randolph of Virginia, and his father comes from splendid Massachusetts stock. You're of too good blood yourself not to realize what that means."

Graham snorted.

"What difference does it make if a fellow's

lineage reads like the chapters in the Bible enumerating the tribes of Israel, if he isn't a man? And if he is a man, who cares what his family has done or left undone? There's Harry Fitch of the first class. Did you know that when he came here he didn't have a change of underwear, and actually objected to taking a weekly bath? Well, it's a fact."

"But they call him Dude Fitch," gasped Connelly incredulously, "and he's one of the hop managers and seems quite a ladies' man in every way. I've really been counting on him when my mother and sisters come up later in the summer."

Graham surveyed his classmate through narrowed lids.

"Dude Fitch was called so first in derision, because he was the opposite of all that goes to make up a dude, but you see what he is now."

"I'm glad you told me," Connelly murmured, "I'd no idea he was of such common origin. These uniforms of ours level us all to the same grade, and — and I'd have been awfully mortified to have introduced him to the family. I'm more than obliged you warned me against him, Bobby."

"Well, you needn't be," flamed Graham hotly, "for I had no thought of warning you against

Fitch. He's a splendid fellow, and worth a dozen little whipper-snappers like young Winthrop, for all his mother was a Randolph, and his father Secretary of State."

Connelly laughed indulgently.

" It's easy enough to talk that way, Graham, with such good stock back of you, but I'll venture, with all your vaunted democracy, you're proud of your ancestors."

" I'm proud they were honest men and women," put in Graham, " and that if I have any gentility it's not so lightly veneered that I'm afraid to get it scratched by rubbing up against so-called common people."

Faulkner and the other first classman exchanged an amused glance, but before Connelly could answer, a good looking youngster burst into the room with an excited:

" What do you fellows think of a plebe class not yet out of ' beast barracks ' getting up an Anti-Hazing Society? "

" A *what?* " echoed the other men incredulously.

" Yes, sir, an Anti-Hazing Society, if you please! I understand it's engineered by that Schuyler Van Norsdell or Van Norsdell Schuyler, whichever way his name goes. You know that

'B. J.,' uppity, nose-in-the-air chap from the 'prep' school at Highland Falls?"

"But how did you get on to it, Burnham?" gasped the acting first sergeant, staggered at the effrontery of the plebes.

"Quite by accident. It seems they're going to meet east of the Library at release from quarters on Friday afternoon, and old Thurston has promised to get there some way or other to take notes, his experience as a reporter and knowledge of shorthand making him just the fellow to pull off the job successfully."

"But the plebes would recognize at once that he wasn't of their class," objected Connelly.

"How could they?" flared Burnham, "when they're not acquainted with each other yet, and have probably never seen Thurston? In a suit of 'cits' they couldn't suspect he was a yearling. Oh, it will be as easy — as — as —"

"'Math' was for you last year, Burnham?" suggested Connelly.

Burnham grinned good naturedly.

"You fellows just wait till Friday and see how well my plan of campaign works out. Poor little innocents! I could a tale unfold that would freeze their young blood and cause their hair to

pompadour as naturally as the peevish porcupine's."

"But why didn't they wait until next week when they had found out the result of the examinations?" asked Connelly.

"Because Van Norsdell Schuyler, or Schuyler Van Norsdell, having been at the 'prep' school a year or more, probably knew there would be no other chance after that for a class meeting. Oh, I'd give my chevrons to be in Thurston's place on Friday evening," and Cupid Burnham smiled the cherubic smile that his classmates knew meant mischief of some kind.

"Have you reported it to the officer in charge?" asked Faulkner soberly.

"Of course he hasn't, you old official wet blanket," put in the other first classman. "Let the little innocents eat, drink, and be merry to-day, for to-morrow they'll have to pay the bill, and there's nothing I'd like better than to see that bumptious army chap taken down a peg or two. Mark my words, he's at the bottom of this and not young Van Norsdell at all!"

Faulkner looked at his classmate very gravely.

"Did you and Mr. Stirling ever meet before?" he asked.

"Yes, years ago when my father was on the active list," returned the other, flushing a bit.

"But you didn't acknowledge the acquaintance in any way when he reported," persisted Faulkner. "Weren't you good friends in the past, Ben?"

For a moment the first classman hesitated.

"Why — er — that is — well, you see, Stirling's younger than I, and of course didn't go with the same crowd of boys. He can't be much over nineteen now, and I'm twenty-four."

"But I don't see why you didn't shake hands, or welcome him in some way to the Academy," persisted Faulkner. "In fact, you were the only one who 'jumped' him at all, he was so well up on military etiquette."

Ben Bonnaffan blushed again.

"To tell the truth, Faulkner, Jack Stirling was a very quarrelsome, combative sort of youngster, always on the lookout for a fight, and — and —" he hesitated for a moment, "Oh, you know the kind of chap he must have been by the fact of his going to the Commandant's his first day on the post, for as an army boy he should have known he wasn't expected to shine socially while yet a plebe, and a plebe in 'beast barracks' at that!"

" Well, if he's at the bottom of this Anti-Hazing business we'll teach him what it means to buck up against constituted authority," growled Burnham savagely.

Graham threw an arm around his classmate's shoulder.

" Cupid," he said softly, " I remember just a year ago that you had very decided views on anti-hazing yourself."

Burnham made a wry face.

" Was I ever such an idiot? " he protested, and then with his infectious laugh, " Well, old man, I notice that people with great ideas of reform usually mean it for their neighbours, seldom for themselves. Besides, I learned so much of the gentle art of hazing last year that I want to put it to good account."

" As for myself," mused Faulkner soberly, " I believed in hazing even when I was undergoing it, and realized that plebe camp would do more for me than the Academic Board and Tactical Department rolled into one. It really doesn't hurt a man to be told the truth about himself, and hazing, such as they give us at West Point, simply impresses upon a fellow the high ideals of a soldier and a gentleman."

Ben Bonnaffan's loosely hung mouth curved into the semblance of a smile as he started to speak, but Faulkner, his eyes on his classmate's face, went on even more earnestly:

"Of course hazing should be kept within bounds, and should never, never be allowed to cover spite work."

Cupid Burnham looked up indignantly.

"A man who would use authority over plebes in that way ought to be drummed out of the Corps," he spluttered, "but it's not a thing a lot of 'B. J.' candidates should organize about anyway, and I think every man who joins the Anti-Hazing Society should be punished, not by the authorities but by the Corps itself!"

CHAPTER FIVE

Despite Ben Bonnaffan's assertions to the contrary, Jack Stirling took little or no interest in the Anti-Hazing Society. In company with the rest of the class, he had been invited to join, but the contemplation of camp life held no terrors for the boy who had been preparing himself from childhood for life at West Point; and he knew, as did few of the others, that the much talked of hazing was not of a kind to hurt a man, but consisted, for the most part, of necessary setting up exercises, and a general moral and mental setting down process that served to point out defects of character undreamed of until then.

That custom, not regulations, permitted the new cadets to wait on the older men Stirling understood, and he was also well aware that no degrading service would be required of them, the traditions of the place being strongly against such a thing, while a plebe who attempted to "boot lick" an upper classman, or do anything outside those duties prescribed in the unwritten law,

would have faced the contempt of the entire Corps.

"There are ten of us 'prep' school fellows in the Society," its president had explained to Jack on one of their after supper walks, "and if we can only get a few others from among the men just entering, I think we could hold the yearlings off for the summer. Once back in barracks there's no time for hazing, and we'd have the distinction of being the first plebe class at West Point never molested; or, at least, those of us who join the Society would be pointed out for years as the liberators of future fourth classmen."

Stirling refused to be impressed.

"If I really thought hazing wrong, which I don't," he had answered, "I'd rather break it up next year when we'd be in a position to do it successfully, than make a failure of it now!" and though Van Norsdell talked to him all through release from quarters, his earnest, sensitive face aglow with enthusiasm, Jack Stirling was unmoved.

Out of all the class, little Riggs and Dalton of Texas were the only ones who endorsed Stirling's sentiments, though Raymond of Missouri, with his usual caution, refused to be enlisted in the ranks of the anti-hazers until he knew more

definitely just what was expected of him; while Secretary Winthrop's son, little Sampson of Tennessee, and Lampton of New Hampshire were so in sympathy with the tenets of the incendiary document that they could hardly wait for the meeting before inscribing their names thereto.

As for Bartholomew Bayard of Kentucky, he could talk of nothing else, seeming more attracted, however, by the heroism of the undertaking than by the possibility of not being hazed in plebe camp. For Bayard was a dreamer and an idealist, despite his six foot three of awkwardness, his gobbling voice just changing, his absurd habit of blushing to the roots of his fair hair on the slightest provocation, and the great hands and feet to which he had not grown up for all his seventeen years.

" It would be such a glorious tradition to leave behind us," he had said in his uncertain voice that ran up the scale more often than down, " and if we succeed in the undertaking it will be a monument to our class for all time, and future generations of cadets will look back upon us with much the same reverence and awe that we now regard the captured guns and flags and all those sacred relics of our country's past."

As he talked, Bayard flushed up to the tops of his big ears, his hands made awkward gestures, and his toes turned in a bit, but for all that a certain look in the blue eyes commanded respect, for it was the look of a man who would die for a cause.

"Since he's not my brother, I suppose I can call him a fool without disobeying the Scriptures," little Riggs said to Raymond that night.

"Yes," Raymond agreed, "but he's the sort of fool that leads forlorn charges, sacrifices his career for a principle, or lays down his life for a friend."

Riggs laughed.

"He's a regular Don Quixote, that's what he is, and of course the poor duffer doesn't recognize this anti-hazing business is only a windmill, after all."

Raymond flushed, and Riggs, remembering that his room-mate was still undecided on the hazing question, caught up a broom in lieu of a guitar and began to sing, quite softly so the cadet officers would not hear, an old, old plebe song that runs something like this

"They call me 'beast' and 'vile reptile,'
But I would have you know

I'd rather be a kangaroo
In a real circus show
Where, I am sure, the animals
Are happier far than we,
For they don't have a squad drill
In their menagerie.

"The lions, tigers, bears, and wolves
Can never feel our woes,
Nor does the elephant depress
His elephantine toes,
While even little monkeys
Are happy, gay, and free,
And hold their hands just as they please
In their menagerie."

The next evening on release from quarters the plebes, in little groups of two and three and four, found their way to a meeting place just east of the Library.

"It was suspiciously easy," whispered Riggs to Jack Stirling, the two having gone as much in the hope of putting an end to the nonsense as in standing by the class. "They must be giving us rope enough to hang ourselves!" And then a moment later: "I say, Stirling, who's that duffer over there in the striped sack suit? No, I don't mean Lampton of New Hampshire, but the chap he's talking to. It strikes me I haven't noticed

him before, and he carries himself so well that — by Jove, you don't suppose he *could* be a yearling?"

Here Riggs' conjectures were interrupted by young Winthrop's well modulated voice.

"The meeting will please come to order," he said quietly, and as the subdued chatter subsided, "I move that Mr. Schuyler Van Norsdell act as chairman of the meeting."

"I second the motion," Bayard piped up in his uncertain treble, and at the same moment Stirling whispered to Riggs:

"Raymond says he doesn't remember that fellow in the striped sack suit, either, but Dalton thinks he's a Mississippi man, and though he's forgotten his name he remembers his face perfectly."

Meanwhile young Winthrop had put the question of the chairman's selection to vote, and as every one was apparently in favour of the motion, he announced that Mr. Schuyler Van Norsdell would take the chair.

As the first business in order, Mr. Lampton of New Hampshire was elected secretary, and at the chairman's suggestion, he proceeded to state the object of the meeting, after which the resolutions, agreed upon beforehand by the original

members of the Society, were passed around. But despite Mr. Lampton's vocabularic fireworks on the subject, few gave the document the approval of their signatures, whereupon Mr. Van Norsdell called another member of the original ten to the chair, and proceeded to address the assembly, his face aflame with enthusiasm, his voice ringing out now and then like a yearling corporal's at plebe drill.

He was even more in earnest than Mr. Lampton had been, and pointed out with no little eloquence that once hazing was done away with at West Point, all discipline and drill would be put into the hands of the officers of the institution, so that in the future, plebes would not have to submit to the petty tyranny of boys little older than themselves, who drilled them, marched them to and from meals, inspected their rooms, and had entire control over them from reveille to taps, for like many another plebe class few among them realized that beyond the Alps of cadet discipline lay the Italy of official supervision.

As Van Norsdell closed his peroration with a sententious reference to liberty, fraternity, and equality, there was great applause, though somewhat subdued, for even as it was they had been

unmolested longer than at any time since their entrance to the Academy, a sinister happening to men who knew the customs of the place as well as did Riggs and Stirling!

With few exceptions, the class had been stirred to its depths, not so much by what Van Norsdell said as the way he said it, his handsome head thrown back, his nostrils quivering, his eyes sparkling with the enthusiasm of his subject. But little Riggs was wise in his generation, and followed Van Norsdell's impassioned appeal by a witty speech which left the candidates with the impression that plebe camp was a great character builder, after all, and that while hazing might be somewhat of a travesty on government, still it illustrated the right and power of a superior to command and, in the last analysis, was but subordination reduced to its lowest terms.

The president of the Anti-Hazing Society frowned heavily when Riggs began to speak, and finally, with an appearance of partisanship not quite seemly in a chairman, he interrupted the diverting whimsicality by a rather sullen reference to the fact that both Riggs and Stirling could afford to make light of hazing, as they were shielded by their respective fathers' positions in

the army and navy, not to mention the fact that Stirling was a personal friend of the Commandant.

This made Jack laugh, and forgetting his embarrassment, once the chairman had let down the parliamentary bars, he started in with a good natured:

"That's just where you're all off, Schuyler, for if there's any distinction made at West Point it's to come down hardest on the sons of army officers or men prominent in political life; for the fellow with a wealthy or influential father must be made to feel that in the democracy of the most democratic school or college in the world, he stands no better chance than the son of a day labourer, while the army boy is supposed to know something of the drills before entering and is hazed for being 'gross' if he doesn't.

"As for my acquaintance with the Commandant, it's not in the least to my advantage. In fact, it took all the grit I had to go up to his house my first day on the post, for I knew it would look 'B. J.' to any cadet who saw me. But just because I was afraid to do it, I went, and as luck would have it, met a lot of yearlings making their first call on a girl who is visiting there."

Jack stopped short, for he had not meant

to tell this story on himself, having little more humour in his make-up than Van Norsdell, but because he felt it might help his classmates to a better realization of the hazing question, he went on bravely:

"The girl and I were children together years ago in the West, and as she was new to the Point, she hadn't an idea what a hole she was getting me into by introducing those young imps, and telling them my entire history, even to the fact that I was once chased by Apaches in Arizona.

"Why, she actually asked them to look after me," Jack gulped as he said it, "so you see there's no doubt but that I'll come in for my share of hazing before the summer's over. So far I've escaped, because I happened to know the setting up drills and regulations fairly well, but once in camp I'll run the gauntlet with the rest of the class!"

Everybody laughed, and Jack, in spite of a mounting embarrassment, went on:

"I tell you fellows this, that you may know I expect my share of hazing this summer, but in spite of it I can't see my way clear to sign the anti-hazing resolutions."

Stirling wanted to say more. He felt his class-

mates ought to be made to understand that it was most unmilitary to defy cadet authority, sanctioned as it was by the Tactical Department, but instead he urged that the Society be broken up as soon as possible for prudential reasons.

" It won't help us a bit with the older cadets," he pleaded boyishly, " and in fact if they once get hold of it, as is sure to happen, it will do us real harm."

Out of all the class Raymond, Dalton, and Burges of Maine were the first to agree with Stirling and Riggs, but finally only nineteen, in addition to the original ten, signed the paper made out by Schuyler Van Norsdell, those not signing, although greatly in the majority, feeling somewhat under a cloud in thus being disloyal to the class at the very outset, especially as " the first pleasure of the meeting " was the withdrawal of every one not in sympathy with anti-hazing.

" Did anybody notice whether the man in the striped sack suit joined the anti-hazers? " asked Riggs, as he and three or four others walked slowly back to barracks.

" Yes, he signed the paper," returned Raymond thoughtfully. " It was a funny, cramped signature that I couldn't quite make out, but the

first name began with a Y and the second with a C."

"Yearling Corporal," howled Riggs, "Yearling Corporal, that's what it was;" but just then "Call to quarters" sounded, and the plebes arrived in the area of barracks on a run, the twenty-eight members of the Anti-Hazing Society all but getting a "late," while the twenty-ninth, in a striped sack suit, slunk back to camp and, waiting till the sentinel on Number Six had his back turned, crept across his post and into a tent, where a moment later he was busily engaged transcribing into longhand some hurriedly scrawled shorthand notes.

Not long before "Tattoo," the call of "Candidates turn out promptly" rang through barracks, and in a moment the iron stairs resounded to hurrying feet, but Stirling noticed, as he fell into ranks, that the lines were thinner by some twenty odd men, and with eyes straight to the front, his face expressionless, and his little fingers on the seams of his trousers, he trembled for the fate of the Anti-Hazers.

Why, oh, why, had his classmates made their first protest against cadet discipline, a direct violation of a military order? Why had they dared the older cadets so early in the game? And,

more incredible still, why were the third classmen making no comment on their absence as noted in the roll call?

Jack wished he had been more forceful in his appeal to the Anti-Hazers that evening. He felt he was partly to blame for the whole affair. As an army boy he should not have been afraid to have characterized the proceeding as mutinous, rebellious, and seditious. He should have pointed out that obedience was the Alpha and Omega of a soldier's existence. He should have told them that in war times their conduct would have been looked upon as traitorous, that it was nothing less than insurrection, which, according to the fifty-eighth Article of War, is classed with burglary, arson, manslaughter, and murder.

West Point was not a military school to Jack Stirling. It was the beginning of his life as an officer in the army, and at the very least, Schuyler Van Norsdell's Anti-Hazing Society was to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, and that men who expected to wear the uniform of their country in four years, and who immediately after their January examinations would take the oath of office, could have stooped to such a thing was unheard of, monstrous.

He suffered in those few minutes of waiting as only a conscientious fellow without a particle of humour can suffer, and he reproached himself bitterly for the whole affair. As long as he lived he would remember the stern look on the acting first sergeant's face as he checked off the names of those missing from the rolls, and he expected every moment to have him order out of ranks any one who had knowledge of the intended mutiny and had not given information thereof to his commanding officer.

Instead of which, the plebes were solemnly marched into barracks, an unprecedented occurrence as they always broke ranks in the area. Then, two by two, they climbed the stairs to the third floor of the eighth division, where they were halted at Schuyler Van Norsdell's very door.

Jack remembered now that there had been some talk of a final meeting that night in Schuyler's room, and he shuddered at the probable fate of the Anti-Hazers; for such a direct violation of orders would of course necessitate their dismissal from the Military Academy, quite apart from their insubordinate conduct in having formed a society inimical to constituted authority.

He knew how awed his classmates were, and

noticed that little Riggs, just ahead of him, was trembling violently, which showed that Riggs, as a navy boy, realized the enormity of the offence as he himself did.

There was a moment of intense suspense, and then the acting first sergeant dramatically threw the door wide open.

The room was empty!

CHAPTER SIX

No, not entirely empty, for from the top of the clothes-press came a loud *cock-a-doodle-do!*

Jack saw little Riggs' shoulders tremble more violently than ever, and to his amazement the cadet lieutenant's voice rang out with a stern:

"Stop that laughing in ranks, gentlemen. Mr. Riggs, sir, wipe off that smile. Such levity at a military formation is unseemly." Then in the same crisp tone:

"Gentlemen, you may break ranks. As many as possible will please enter the room. The others are requested to stand near the door. And now allow me to introduce our speaker of the evening, Mr. Schuyler Van Norsdell of New York."

There was great shuffling of feet, much crowding and pushing, some half hysterical snickers, quickly suppressed by the cadets in charge, and a somewhat ominous silence broken by the cadet lieutenant, preternaturally grave and overwhelmingly polite, the "Macaroni" of Raymond and Riggs, the "Big Ben" of Jack's boyhood.

" Gentlemen of the fourth class," he began in his offensive way, " it is my great pleasure and privilege to preside over this meeting and introduce our distinguished guest of the evening, Mr. Van Norsdell Schuyler — I should say, Mr. Schuyler Van Norsdell — of New York. As all of you know, Mr. Van Norsdell is the distinguished gentleman whose lecture at the Library this afternoon was largely patronized by members of the fourth class.

" At the earnest solicitation of some of us unable to attend that most interesting meeting, Mr. Van Norsdell has kindly consented to read aloud the resolutions adopted by his distinguished Society, with appropriate comments after each resolution. Were it not for lack of time, Mr. Van Norsdell would reiterate his views on hazing at West Point, and would also tell us how and why the regulations and customs of the Military Academy should be changed, but as our time is somewhat limited we have suggested that he confine himself to the resolutions adopted, and his comments thereon; though in view of the many conflicting and false ideas entertained by upper classmen on the discipline of new cadets, Mr. Van Norsdell will give his lecture on hazing

very frequently once we are established in camp!" and with a sweeping bow towards the clothes-press, "It is my great privilege to yield the floor to Mr. Schuyler Van Norsdell of New York."

There was a moment of intense silence, and then from the top of the clothes-press where the distinguished guest of the evening had assumed, as nearly as space would allow, the first position of a soldier, came a husky, strained voice:

"*Cock-a-doodle-do!*"

"Louder, louder!" urged the cadet lieutenant kindly. "We all want to hear."

Once again came the mournful sound, and this time even those out in the corridor and on the stairs heard it distinctly. Then followed the reading of the incendiary document, with an additional "sir" after every punctuation, the comments on each resolution being the barking of a dog, the lowing of a cow, the cackle of a hen, the purring of a cat, the neighing of a horse, and other barn-yard noises; while from an adjoining room a chorus of twenty odd voices sang the sprightly air of "Yankee Doodle" as a running accompaniment to the melodious Whereas and Be it Resolved of the erstwhile Anti-Hazing Society. At the close of this dignified performance

"FLUTTERED DOWN FROM THE TOP OF THE WARDROBE."

the big, red-faced candidate flapped his arms for a moment, and with a half smothered "*tweet-tweet-tweet*" fluttered down from the top of the wardrobe right into the arms of his astonished classmates; after which the plebes dispersed to their respective rooms where the "Anti-antis," as they now called themselves, gave way to unrestrained mirth.

On the following Monday when the too familiar call "Candidates turn out promptly" rang through Cadet Barracks, it is a wonder those echoing footsteps on the iron stairs were not drowned in the excited throbbing of a hundred and fifty hearts, for at last the result of the preliminary examination was to be published and those days of waiting, so full of anxiety for every one, were at an end.

When the roll had been called and the Adjutant walked in front of the long, ragged line of candidates, Jack Stirling trembled so that Cadet Corporal Graham noticed it.

"Poor chap," thought Graham to himself, "he evidently knows he's made a clean 'fess' at the examinations. What a shame that a brace like that doesn't carry brains with it."

Not far from Jack stood Raymond of Missouri,

white with fear, not so much because he thought he might have failed as that it was his nature to worry and dread the worst, even when everything was propitious; while farther up the line, little Lampton of New Hampshire, with his customary optimism, felt that he had passed a brilliant examination, when, in truth, he had done less well than many another fellow now trembling in his boots.

Sick with an anxiety that grew with every moment of suspense, Jack Stirling gritted his teeth together and waited. As in a dream, he heard the Adjutant directing those whose names should be read to fall out of ranks and proceed to their quarters. Then came the orders about turning in articles drawn from the cadet commissary and settling their accounts with the Treasurer, after which they were to go to their homes and await the action of the President on their respective cases.

At last came the list of names beginning with Abbott of Tennessee and ending with Zane of Texas. Jack strained his ears to hear, but in his excitement could scarcely distinguish one name from another.

On every side men were falling out of ranks,

the " thin, red line of heroes" growing noticeably less as the Adjutant rattled off the list. There went the honour graduate of a military school on the Hudson, a victim of the elementary character of the examinations, for in those days a boy of twelve or fourteen could have done better in many of the studies than did young men further advanced. Here an uncouth country boy shambled away, his shoulders still braced as he had been taught. Now it was a man who had been studying for years to prepare himself; now a fellow who had never heard of the Academy till the announcement of the competitive examination a month previous. Some bore the defeat gallantly, some brazenly, while an occasional man stumbled blindly out of ranks, his face white and drawn with anguish. However they took their failure to " pass," it was harrowing to see those defeated candidates answer to their names, one by one.

Jack Stirling felt he could bear it no longer, and trembled violently as the Adjutant finished the R's and started in on S. Suddenly he heard his own name called, and the sound brought him out of his stupor. Oh, it couldn't be that after all those years of preparation and longing he was to fail at the very outset! What would his

father say? His mother? Donnelly? All those good friends who had wished him God speed so short a time before?

With a stifled sob, he threw back his head, clenched his hands tightly, and started to step forward with the customary "Here!" when a slight pressure on his left arm stopped him. Also he was conscious the place on his other side was empty, and that the Adjutant continued to read from the list in his hand. What did it mean? What *could* it mean? But even as he asked himself these questions, the army boy realized, with a wave of suffocating joy, that while the surname had been the same as his own the initials were different.

It was Edward Stirling of Massachusetts that had been "found," not Jack Stirling, "At large;" and now the Adjutant was on another letter. He was safe — safe.

The reaction was so great that Stirling wanted to shout aloud, but even in his exhilaration he felt for the boy who had been found deficient, the boy whose surname was his own, and a few moments later, when the successful candidates swept back into barracks, Jack looked the other fellow up, but Edward Stirling of Massachusetts needed no sympathy.

" I wouldn't stay here for a thousand dollars a minute," he volunteered jauntily, " and if any one ever mentions West Point again in my presence, he'll get this in his solar plexus, see!" and a brawny fist doubled itself up menacingly.

Jack laughed.

" Well, old fellow, I'm glad you don't mind leaving," he said. " It would have gone so hard with me that if I'd failed," he choked a little on the word, " I'd have gone to the nearest recruiting station and enlisted, that's all."

" *Enlisted!* " echoed the older boy incredulously. " And what would any one enlist for in times of peace? "

" Why, to get a commission through the ranks," explained Jack in surprise at the other's ignorance.

The Massachusetts boy stared at him incredulously.

" So you like the army? " he asked at length.

" Like it? " cried Jack. " Why, I love it, man! " And then, carried away by his own enthusiasm, " I can't imagine a better profession, or a more unselfish one! " Here he stopped suddenly, smitten with the self-consciousness that afflicts the very young, but Stirling of Massachusetts was interested.

"They say," he began haltingly, "that a standing army is a terrible drain on a country, and a useless one, too, because in time of war all men physically able would cheerfully proffer their services to defend the flag."

"But it takes something more than cheerfulness to conquer an enemy," flashed Jack. "It takes skill and — and training. You can't raise a good army and navy in a few weeks; and, as a rule, an enemy doesn't give you time to prepare for his coming. Of course in the end I think our country would win out against any nation in the world, but we oughtn't to trust it in the hands of untrained men. It's — it's too sacred for that."

From babyhood up Jack Stirling had been made to feel that the country was his mother; that her interest was his interest; her life his life; and that everything must be subservient to maintaining the dignity and prestige of her honour, while to serve her in any capacity was a great privilege. He said something of the kind in his own boyish way to Stirling from Massachusetts, his speech jerky, curt, and even slangy in proportion to the intensity of his feelings; but the other understood, for when he spoke again there was a subtle change in his voice.

"You've the stuff in you soldiers are made of, Stirling," he said half shyly, "and, by Jove, I wish you had talked to me this way before examinations. You see, the Governor got me the appointment because he thought I needed the four years' discipline here, and I — well, I was hard-headed and I wanted to go to Harvard instead, and so — " he raised himself till his mouth was on a level with Jack's ear, and whispered the rest.

Jack jumped back incredulously.

"You *tried* to 'fess'!" he gasped. "You did it purposely?"

The older boy nodded.

"I hadn't an idea the appointment meant so much," he excused himself, "and I wanted to go to Harvard. The red tape and military discipline here galled me just as it does Van Norsdell. As for the army, I shouldn't have gone into it anyway, even if I'd graduated. That is, I felt so about it before I talked with you."

Jack stared incredulously, but before he could gather himself together Stirling of Massachusetts went on:

"Now I not only want to stay, I want to graduate and go into the service. And, Jack, I'll do it,

too. I'll get another appointment. I'll come back next year. See if I don't!"

The boys' hands clung together in a long grasp of mutual understanding and, "I wish we were going to be classmates," cried both Stirlings almost in the same breath.

For days those remaining were haunted by the woebegone faces of the defeated candidates, as they loaded their luggage on a wagon in the area. But at the same time many of the successful ones half envied the unfortunates their freedom, for the entrance to the Military Academy was not a triumphant one, an unheard of and unthought of amount of red tape being measured out to the plebes, in addition to that which already bound them hand and foot.

In the Mess Hall that night, their table manners were revised and corrected for the first time and they were compelled to keep their shoulders back, sit upright, and not raise their eyes from their plates except for a moment when absolutely necessary.

In fact the discipline previous to this had been mere child's play, and as the drill was increased to two hours at a stretch, an occasional man, soft from lack of exercise, fainted in ranks. The

very act of standing perfectly erect with palms facing out, hands at the sides, heels together, and shoulders back, was in itself a severe strain, while to walk with the toes touching the ground first at every step made some of the men look as if they could scarcely walk at all. In no circumstances could the hand be raised even to wipe away the streaming perspiration, which was a great hardship, considering the state of the weather.

As visiting was strictly prohibited among the plebes after "Call to quarters," some of those left without room-mates felt the depressing influence of being alone, and had much difficulty that first night writing cheerful letters to relatives or friends, announcing their successful entrance to the Military Academy. But Jack Stirling, for all that he had lost a comrade in the other Stirling and in his temporary room-mate, Dick Dalton, wrote a letter overflowing with joy, not only on having passed the examinations, but because of some exceptionally good news from home.

This was contained in an epistle received that evening in the familiar scrawl of Sergeant Donnelly. It read:

"My deer Mr. Jack, Respected Sir: — You know I aint much on letter ritein, but yr Pa he says I can be the fust to tell you the grate news.

"Yes, Sir, Mr. Jack, he says they wont tellygraff you or nothin, but that I may let you know in my own way youve got a kid brother. He arrived on the post not 6 hours ago, & reported to the K. O. at once, goin strate up to yr quarters, sir, & there I held him in these very arms thats ritin to you just 15 minits past, the most ridikerlous little cuss you ever seen, about as long as my hand streched out good, & that red youde think he was blushin with shame cause theyve gone & named him after poor old Donnelly.

"Yes Sir, Mr. Jack, theyve gone & called the kid after me — Sammy, they calls him, Sammy Donnelly, after a old, good for nothin trooper grown gray in the service, who, if you hadent up and taught him better, wud still be sinein his name with a X, & walkin the road that the Chaplain says leads to destruction.

"Dinah, whose nurse to him just as she was to you, Dinah, she says its scandalus havein a gentlemans son called after a Non-Com. She says the Major only done it cause he allays felt I saved yr life that day the Apaches chased you in Arizona —

though the Lord knows it was you done all the savein, me bein so keerless as to git in line with a Injuns gun. But any way Dinah, she says its like to turn my silly old hed havein the Majors Kid and your Brother named after me. She dont think Ime none to modist as it is I reckin — and she says like as not theyde have caled the Kid that any way, Sammy bein such a pritty name.

" So I up & says — since its such a pritty name howd you like to be caled *Missus* Sammy — I says — & bless my brass buttons, if she dident answer *yes!* Now Mr. Jack, respected sir, you aint a bit more flabbergasted than I was myself. No sir, you aint, cause Ive bin sparkin Dinah going on 18 years now & shes held me off like I had the Small Pox, & then all of a suddint to turn round that way & say shele have me.

"Well, better late than never — says I to Her — You speak for yrself — says Dinah to me in that snappy way Ive allways liked — Praps Ime not so *late* as you think I be — says she with her hed in the air — Appeerences is deceetful — says she. That they are, Dinah — says I — if you claim to be under 50 — says I, & with that I dodged, for Dinah come at me with the rollin pin.

"But Land Sakes, Mr. Jack, Ide rather have

Dinah after me with a rollin pin than any other woman with a hunk of pie. Seems as if a man likes the skowls of the woman he loves better than the smiles of the one he dont love.

"The Baby ways 9 lbs.

"Yr ob. Servent, SAMUEL DONNELLY, *Seenyur.*

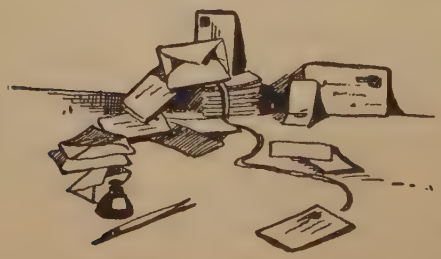
"P. P. C. Sergeant O'Briens dog had a fite with the quartermasters Bull Terrier the other day & licked the stuffin outer him.

"Ime goin to put him on my horse tomorrer if I can sneek him out from undir Dinahs nose — I mean the Kid not the Bull Terrier —

"The whole troops just crazy cause were goin to join the regment at Leavenworth in the fall.

"Once agin, Mr. Jack, with all perliteness, beleeve me Yr ob. Servent,

"SAMUEL DONNELLY, *Seenyur.*"



CHAPTER SEVEN

The first week in July found the plebes still in barracks, to their own great delight and the impatience of the yearlings over at Camp Jonathan Williams.

At daybreak they were awakened by the ear splitting thunder of the reveille gun and the racket of the drums and fifes summoning them to roll call, and full soon they learned the necessity of getting into line at that last imperative tap of the drum, and answering promptly to their names as the acting first sergeant rattled them off. A moment later and they were in their rooms again, with a half hour in which to complete their dressing, pile their bedding, and put in order their own particular alcove, the room orderly for the week attending to the general "policing" of quarters, and being held responsible by the subdivision inspector for anything not in its proper place, or an infinitesimal speck of dust that might slightly mar the spotless

white of a glove drawn over the surface of mantelpiece or table.

At five forty-five, to the second, "Mess Call" sounded, and once again the plebes fell into ranks and answered to roll call, after which they were marched to breakfast. Then came the morning drill, which consisted of all kinds of arm and leg exercises, ending up with three quarters of a mile "double timing," or in unmilitary English, running, the position of the soldier being stiffly maintained the while. Owing to the intense heat of the July mornings these drills almost exhausted the newcomers, and left not a dry thread upon them. In the afternoon they were trained in the manual of arms.

Of the six boys "herded" together on the third floor of the eighth division, Jack Stirling was the only one who took life philosophically, which came partly from the fact that he had in some degree known what to expect before entering the Academy, and partly that from childhood up he had been accustomed to these very drills and exercises, so that they did not leave him worn out and exhausted as was the case with many of his classmates, some of whom broke down completely under the strain and had to go the hospital.

Young Winthrop was especially "soft," and twice fainted in ranks, while Mizzoo, as Raymond was already called by the class, hobbled around ungracefully on swollen, blistered feet, not so much sick in body as sick at heart, disenchanted and worn out, but showing an indomitable grit that drew Stirling to him wonderfully. Riggs and Bayard also stood the strain of that first fortnight very well, as did Schuyler Van Norsdell and little Lampton; though the one was so careless, and the other so sure of his own infallibility that they were often in the punishment squad, standing in the constrained position of attention, or compelled to execute double step for fifteen minutes at a time, all for what would have seemed to a civilian trivial things, such as stumbling in ranks, letting their guns slip in their hands, a little dust on their shoes or collar or accoutrements, a second or two late at some formation, all the small military sins of omission, as well as the greater sins of commission.

As might have been expected from his early training, the one army boy of the class had no trouble in this regard, and could have drilled the the other plebes as well as any yearling. No need to instruct Jack Stirling in the first position of a

soldier, and as for the setting up exercises, he could have done them in his sleep.

To every one else in the class it was exhausting work, that brought them back from a drill almost despairing of being able to stand the hard life another hour; though as a rule, after resting and comparing notes, they would feel better about it all, some of them even tearing up letters of resignation written in the privacy of their rooms.

To one who has never witnessed a plebe class of the old days being "licked into shape," no word picture could adequately describe the severity of West Point discipline or the restrictions thrown around a new cadet. The smallest imaginable offence would put him in confinement, that is, deprive him of the privilege of leaving his own room in barracks or tent in camp, except for official purposes, the length of confinement varying with the gravity of the offence.

Everywhere they went the sound of the drum and fife accompanied them, while on Sunday morning a bugle took the place of the solemn tolling of a bell to call them to church. Even there they were not allowed to forget their military surroundings, for flags were draped above the pulpit, these flags being surmounted by a gigantic

eagle, above which was a mural decoration entitled "War and Peace." On one side of the chapel were memorial tablets to the officers who fell in the Mexican War, and on the other side were tablets to all the generals under Washington in the Revolutionary War, while enshrined like patron saints of West Point were the British, Hessian, and Mexican flags, taken in battle. The very prayer books, hymnals, and Bibles were marked with a U. S., the service itself being especially directed to the officers and cadets; for, after all, real Christianity is closely allied to patriotism, and love of country and love of God are the most ennobling of sentiments.

Once established in camp and assigned to their respective companies according to height, the tall men on the flank, and the short ones in the centre, the plebes began to feel more like real soldiers, especially as they had been put into uniform. Social distinctions were also less clearly marked, now that they dressed alike, and Bartholomew Bayard was quite as prepossessing in his gray pantaloons, gray jacket, and military cap as the hitherto smartly clad Winthrop.

In addition to the hated squad drill, which still continued, the plebes learned to handle the big

twelve pounders south of camp almost like veterans, and could jump to their places and make things hum in the mock firing, real target practice being reserved for later in the course.

In those old days the morning drills were so severe that they kept hands and feet, unused to them, blistered for weeks at a time. But gradually soft flesh calloused over, the aching back straightened out naturally into the brace required of it, muscles hardened and responded to the demands put upon them, until at last the plebe began to eat more in the Mess Hall and sleep better at night. Then a faint colour showed under the fine bronze of his skin, his chest broadened out, and he increased in weight, while his eyes lost the dazed, hurt look that had haunted them since his first introduction to "beast barracks." Finally he managed to hold up his head again with all the old-time pride, and the added consciousness that he was fast developing into a well set-up young soldier, not a mere freshman in a college, but a professional man on a salary, for what else does it mean to have all one's expenses paid at the Academy, with the certainty of being made a second lieutenant in the army on graduation?

Every morning saw the plebes out on the cavalry

plain, where, after stacking their guns, they were put through an hour's severe drill, when they would take arms and double time for a short distance with the guns over their shoulders. Returning to their tents, they had only five minutes before inspection, at which they had to appear in clean linen, with shoes neatly blacked. Guard-mounting, the most impressive military formation of the day, followed close on the heels of inspection, and then came artillery drill with the field guns south of camp.

During the plebes' artillery drill, the yearlings and first classmen tore up and down the cavalry plain at light battery drill, those members of the first class, not acting as chiefs of platoons or sections, firing the great sea-coast guns on the water front, the roar of heavy artillery that echoed and re-echoed among the hills combining well with the ringing bugle calls, the flash of sabres, and the galloping of horses on the plain. All of which made the plebes, who were simply going through the evolutions of loading, firing, mounting, and dismounting their pieces, feel that they were an integral part of the noisy whole.

Before long the facility with which the plebes went through their artillery drill would have

impressed a stranger with the idea that they were veterans, while by the middle of August the effect of constant training began to show in the ease with which men, who a few weeks before were hopelessly awkward, handled a rifle and went through the manual of arms.

Also another change had taken place in their condition, for to the casual observer they were no longer new cadets, wearing a shell jacket and gray trousers. Instead, they wore the full uniform, consisting of white trousers and a dress-coat, and attended all drills and parades. This is called "going into the battalion," and not a plebe but supposed it was regarded with great dissatisfaction by the older men, who, they were sure, resented being put upon equality with plebes for any purpose.

On going into dress uniform, they were straightway accorded that deference and respect from the casual visitor on the post which the bell buttons demand, nor were they longer subjected to the covert sneers which up to that time had been their portion, though during the dancing hour tourists still came to the windows and stared in, discussing the fourth classmen as if they were pieces of machinery incapable of understanding what was said.

Three times a week the dancing lesson was alternated by one in swimming, the plebes going about a mile and a half up the Hudson, where under the direction of one of the tactical officers most of them quickly learned to keep afloat, though Raymond, who had lived inland all his life, and Bartholomew Bayard from the mountains of Kentucky, were preternaturally slow in learning, their first attempts to swim being really tragic.

To his classmates' surprise, little Riggs, for all his six months at the Naval Academy, could not swim a stroke, and floundered around in the water like the veriest tyro. But he struggled so hard to learn that the instructor had not the heart to be cross with him; though he must have been somewhat discouraged when after getting Riggs apparently well started, and slipping his supporting hand gently away, the boy would sink like a stone, to come up in a moment, puffing like a grampus, and so shaken by his experience that the officer felt obliged to let him crawl into the boat and rest. Neither could Riggs learn to float, for unless the instructor supported him the boy's head would be quickly swallowed up by the water, his violent efforts to get to the surface

but hastening his descent to the bottom; until at last, half drowned, he would beg to be allowed to cling to the side of the boat until he could regain his breath. This lack of progress encouraged a man like Raymond, who was in the same section, as nothing else could have done, and filled Bayard, in the other detachment, with a secret joy that he managed to keep afloat at all, an accomplishment he acquired at his first lesson, whereupon he had literally rested upon his arms, seeming unable to learn even the first principles of swimming.

Fortunately for such men as Raymond, Riggs, and Bayard, the young officer in charge of the swimming detachments was a good natured fellow, who felt the men were doing their best and encouraged them to the utmost, though fully realizing that Raymond and Riggs, in particular, were the most unpromising of pupils.

At about their fifth lesson, the easy going, good natured young fellow took a day's trip to New York, being temporarily relieved from duty by another tactical officer much dreaded in the Corps for his unbending severity of manner. He was a rather silent man, who, if he had not been the hero of several Indian fights, would have been

much disliked by the cadets, though, as it was, they adored him. An officer in whom justice was untempered by mercy, his influence among them was most marked, a word of praise from Old Grizzly, as he was affectionally called, being equivalent to a brevet later in their army life.

A natural born swimmer himself, Old Grizzly was scandalized at Raymond's lack of progress, and really indignant that Riggs after six months at the Naval Academy, in addition to his instruction at West Point, should be unable so much as to keep afloat. In his heart he felt their instructor was to blame, and determined that the plebes should profit by their one day with him, his theory being that the best way to teach a man to swim was to pitch him overboard and let him strike out for himself, especially with a boat near at hand in case of accidents.

Rowing out well beyond every one's depth, Old Grizzly watched the men, one by one, jump overboard and swim around the boat, Raymond and Riggs alone holding back.

"You're afraid, are you?" snarled Old Grizzly.

"No, sir," answered Raymond, "but I didn't think you'd want us to jump overboard when we hadn't learned to keep afloat."

For answer Old Grizzly, who was a powerful fellow, caught Raymond under the arms and tossed him into the river. Riggs protested vigorously, apparently not so much on his own account as on Raymond's, but the officer threw him overboard, too, as deaf to his entreaties as he was blind to the white-faced plebes gathering around the boat, their eyes big with horror, for they knew, as he did not, how helpless both boys were.

"Now sink if you can't swim!" was the last thing poor Raymond heard as the blue waters of the Hudson closed over his luckless head. Having learned implicit obedience his first few weeks at the Academy, Raymond immediately sank.

Down, down, he went, instinct holding his mouth tightly closed, fear making him strike out with his arms and legs, and after a moment or two he was climbing into the boat, shaken and tired and cold, but otherwise none the worse for his experience.

With a sheepish grin, he turned towards his classmates who had proved themselves more accomplished swimmers, but to his amazement they were all unusually grave, and, indeed, paid but slight attention to him, their eyes searching the river anxiously.

Raymond stared from them to the white-faced instructor.

What had happened?

In a moment he understood. Riggs was missing, for after coming to the surface twice, the boy had disappeared.

"It was right over there he came up, sir," volunteered one of the plebes, his eyes staring, his lips twitching painfully as he talked. "Right over there by those willows, sir, and he opened his mouth as if he were crying 'Help,' but no sound came, sir. Then he went down again, and when I saw him the second time his eyes were closed, and — and he certainly did look queer, sir."

The lieutenant shivered nervously, and Raymond's teeth chattered in his head.

Poor little Riggs! He was so full of life, so merry, so laughter-loving. Plebe camp itself had not been able to lower his high spirits or cloud the sunshine of his smile. "B. J. Riggs," the upper classmen called him, not because he was unmilitary or slow to learn the customs of the place, but because he was such a wag, and more than once by his nimble wit had turned the joke of hazing on the upper classmen. In addition he was

possessed of a baritone voice that, according to his friends, could lure the birds from the trees. Also he had the ability to "tell a grind," in the parlance of the Point, which meant he was a Joe Miller, clown, and harlequin all rolled into a sprightly well set-up little plebe, the pride of his own class, the good natured despair of his superiors.

It didn't seem possible they were never to see him again; or hear his jolly laugh; or share in that all pervasive friendliness that made him the most popular man in the class.

Had the instructor not been so frightened himself, the plebes could scarcely have forgiven him for having thrown their two comrades into the water with that ominous instruction, "Sink if you can't swim!" But he was paying dearly for his folly now as, white and trembling, he sprang into the water and struck out towards the spot where the body was last seen. Clutching hold of some willows near the bank, Old Grizzly found a projecting rock, climbed upon it, and as the water there was very deep, he dove again and again, only to come to the surface empty handed.

A train thundered by on its way West. A steamer whistled dolorously in passing.

The lieutenant heard them as in a dream, a frightful dream, the memory of Riggs' ill concealed fear as he was pushed into the water filling him with the keenest remorse, especially as he remembered that most of his fright seemed to be on Raymond's account, for even in his mortal terror the boy had thought first of his comrade, had told the lieutenant that Raymond could not swim.

Oh, how brutal he had been! How criminally careless! How utterly unworthy of his position in the Tactical Department!

At last, confident he could do no more, the instructor swam wearily back to the little boat and climbed in.

Just as he did so, Riggs' head appeared over the gunwale.

"Did I stay under water long enough to suit you, lieutenant?" he asked with an exasperating air of having accomplished a duty.

The boys stared, round-eyed, half frightened. The instructor gasped audibly, but recovering himself quickly, he said in his sternest voice:

"You stayed under long enough to put you in confinement for a month, Mr. Riggs," and then, half grudgingly, "But may I ask where you

learned your feat of swimming under water so long?"

"At the Naval Academy," answered that incorrigible youth, without a trace of shame.

"And why, pray, when you have proved that you could swim so unusually well under water, have you pretended ignorance of swimming on the surface?"

"I don't know, sir," returned Riggs with engaging candour, "but I reckon as much as anything else to keep Mr. Raymond cheered up, sir, he being so slow to learn."

Whereupon the young officer, mopping his wet, red face with a handkerchief, longed to have Riggs court-martialed for insubordinate conduct, but decided finally that since the boy had not embarrassed him by getting drowned, he would limit his punishment as much as was consistent with discipline.

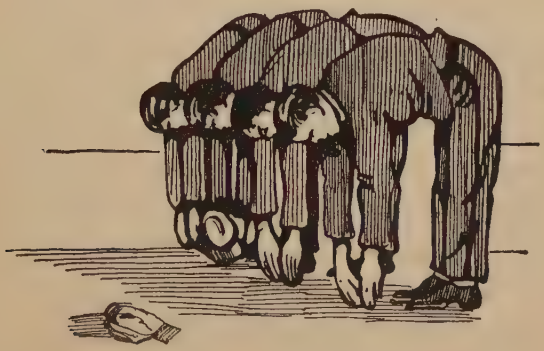
Meanwhile Riggs managed to give Raymond a monstrous wink behind the instructor's back, and whispered:

"Bet you he'll never pitch another fellow overboard who can't swim, eh, Mizzoo?"

Needless to say he never did.

Likewise he held his peace as to Riggs' mischie-

vous deception, but smiled grimly into his sweeping moustache when a few days later the regular instructor of swimming came to ask his method in teaching the art; as from the day Old Grizzly had taken the detachment, Riggs, the impossible, had learned to swim with the greatest ease, while even Raymond could keep afloat and propel himself fairly well by a fancy side stroke. For like the girl of the old-fashioned spelling school, who stumbled on the easy words, and spelled the hard ones right, Raymond always swam with a complicated overhand stroke, taught him by Riggs, a method of buffeting the waves that might well have been the despair of a more accomplished swimmer.



CHAPTER EIGHT

ALTHOUGH the hazing of plebes was strictly forbidden by the authorities, and to be caught at it meant a court-martial and possible dismissal for the guilty ones, many pranks were played on unsuspecting new cadets that summer, including everything from unauthorized exercises to the time-honoured custom of making them " eat that soup " in the Mess Hall, or " jumping " them for giving orders to a superior if they happened to say " come in " when an upper classman scratched on their tent flap.

As Jack Stirling had predicted, he himself suffered all the ills that plebes are heir to on first going over to camp, the story of his visit to the Commandant's having preceded him there, as had sundry unpleasant innuendoes as to his general " B. J. ity," all of which were finally traced to Ben Bonnaffan.

Indeed, Bonnaffan showed a most Christian interest in his neighbour's welfare, and for fear Jack might be overlooked by the yearlings he

took him in hand himself, a proceeding so unusual for a cadet lieutenant that it occasioned no little comment, not only in his own class but among the yearlings, as well.

"To say the least, it's an undignified proceeding," Bobby Graham had fumed, "and I, for one, can't see why a first classman should demean himself by hazing plebes. Carry it a little further and we'd have the 'Supe' and 'Com' over here making fourth classmen do stunts for 'em. I tell you it's undignified, that's what it is, undignified!"

The little group of yearlings agreed with Graham, to a man, most of them thinking, no doubt, that first class hazing was also an infringement on their new found rights as "plebe-killers," so Graham went on to a most respectful silence:

"In addition to Bonnaffan being a first classman, I hear he knew Stirling before — you see they're both army boys — and I hate to say it, but, really, you know, it almost looks at times as if Bonnaffan were taking something out on the kid, working off some old grudge, you know!"

"Oh, nonsense," Burnham flung back, "I don't think there's a fellow in the Corps as mean as that, and as for Bonnaffan, why, he's the nicest

sort of chap. Undoubtedly he thinks Stirling needs discipline, for he told me himself that the boy is an only child and spoiled to death, especially by an old sergeant in his father's troop, a garrulous fellow quite capable of giving Stirling the impression that his appointment to the Academy was a great thing for the place and that he, Stirling, could give the yearlings as good as they sent if they ever attempted to discipline him."

"Well, if he's had such an idea in his head," Graham commented quietly, "he's kept it very much to himself, for I've never seen a better behaved plebe, and as for that visit to the K. O.'s, why shouldn't he have gone there before he reported? If he'd waited and put in a permit to go later, it would have been different. I tell you Bonnaffan's barking up the wrong tree if he thinks that youngster's in need of such strenuous discipline."

Notwithstanding which, at that very moment Mr. Jack Stirling of the fourth class, very red, very hot, and steaming with perspiration, stood in Mr. Bonnaffan's tent doing the double step at that young gentleman's instigation. It was perhaps the warmest afternoon of the year and the tent

walls, instead of affording shade from the sun, seemed to concentrate its rays so that the heat was intensified rather than diminished.

For nearly half an hour Jack had been there, going through the various evolutions, and his head felt queer and dizzy when at a word of command he stopped short, wheeled, and stood at attention, waiting the further orders of his superior. Not by the droop of an eyelash would an onlooker have guessed how tired he really was, but Bonnaffan knew, and raged within himself that Stirling gave no sign. He was so like the little Jack of the old Montana days, quiet, stubborn, and, yes, scornful! That was what annoyed Bonnaffan most, for no matter how long or how severe the exercises were Stirling never by even a look begged for quarter. That spirit must be broken. But how?

There was a long silence. Then the older cadet got to his feet, and with an assumption of carelessness said:

"You will now black my boots, Mr. Stirling, and see that you get a good polish on them, sir!" The plebe stared incredulously at the first classman, stood irresolute for a moment, swallowed hard, and then very respectfully, but with an

undercurrent of firmness not to be mistaken, he replied:

"You know that is against both custom and regulations, Mr. Bonnaffan. No cadet is expected to do menial service for another, sir."

Bonnaffan's pasty face went whiter than ever.

"You decline to obey the order, Mr. Stirling?" he demanded menacingly.

"I do, sir," Jack made answer, quietly enough, though his eyes were blazing.

Bonnaffan had seen him look so once before in the old Montana days when Jack had thrashed him for bullying a younger boy. He remembered it now, now when according to the traditions of the Academy he was Jack's superior and could compel obedience. So, bringing his scowling face within an inch of Jack's, he began abusively:

"Am I to understand, Mr. Stirling, that you are so unsoldierly as to carry personal relations into your official life? Do you refuse to obey this order because — well, because you don't like me?"

Jack shook with indignation, but managed to control his voice enough to stammer out:

"No, sir, only because blacking boots is not required by regulations, sir. I would not do menial service for any one, sir."

Bonnaffan smiled the old irritating smile that used to anger the younger boys of the garrison even more than words.

"So Cadet Stirling draws the line at menial service?" he began sarcastically, and then, bringing his face even nearer, so near that the boy seemed to be looking into four fierce brown eyes instead of two, he went on sneeringly:

"Am I to understand that Mr. Stirling includes in menial service the carrying of water, piling of bedding, or raising and lowering of tent flaps?"

"No, sir," Jack answered, his voice trembling in spite of himself, "but blacking another man's boots has never been done here, sir!"

"And you would do anything else I should ask you to do? Go through any kind of drill or any sort of formation?"

"Anything I didn't consider degrading, sir."

Bonnaffan felt a trifle nonplussed, but no one would have suspected it, for the tone in which he next spoke was more menacing than the words. It was like the crack of a whip before it descends, the whirr of a bullet on its way to the target.

"So you're quite willing to face the consequences of disobeying me in this matter, Mr. Stirling?"

"Perfectly willing, sir," the plebe made answer,

and a moment later he was in his own tent finishing a letter home, a letter full of enthusiasm about the progress the class was making in its drills and breathing his hero worship for some of the older cadets, while between the lines one could read an unfeigned joy that at last he had reached the height of his boyish hopes and was really a cadet at West Point.

Not a word about how hard the hazing had been. Not a line in disparagement of Ben Bonnaffan or his followers. Not a complaint, or even a grumble of any kind. Instead, the letter bore witness to the glamour of the place. He wrote as one uplifted by the glorious traditions on every side, his imagination taking fire at the thought that he was privileged to move in the same old paths that great national heroes had trod, and with the same opportunities ahead of him.

Faster and faster flew his pen, and "like Acestes' shaft of old the swift thought kindled as it flew," so that after he signed the letter Stirling sat there by his locker, dreaming of the record he should make in the history of his country; unless, indeed, like many a brave soul he were destined to die unsung, unpraised, a living sacrifice for his flag.

So engrossed was Jack in his thoughts that he did not look up when a shadow fell across his letter, and only at Faulkner's low voiced "Are you writing home, sir?" did the boy, dazed with dreams of future glory, respond. Mechanically jumping to his feet he fumbled with the buttons of his blouse, but Faulkner, who shared the general feeling in camp that no fourth classman should be molested while writing home, prepared to withdraw. It was as much a matter of honour with upper classmen as not entering a plebe's tent when it was empty.

"But I am through writing, sir," Jack responded earnestly, his admiration for Faulkner shining in his eyes. "I had just signed my name, sir."

Faulkner turned back at once.

"I only wanted to say, Mr. Stirling, that you did quite right this afternoon in not following Mr. Bonnaffan's orders in regard to doing menial service for him. It has just come to my attention, and I understand Mr. Bonnaffan is to offer you an apology, sir." He hesitated a moment, looked at Jack keenly, and then went on: "Of course, if you don't care to accept the apology there is the alternative of a fight, sir."

Faulkner saw Jack's face glow for a moment at the chance of giving Bonnaffan a good drubbing, for they were near enough of a size to have needed no substitute from either class. Boy-like, he longed to settle the whole matter with his fists, to have the Big Ben of long ago realize, as he had realized then, that he could not bully and browbeat a fellow because of the accident of years. Oh, it would be a glorious chance to down Bonnaffan and at the same time make himself quite a hero in the eyes of his own classmates. Jack instinctively clenched his fists and felt the muscles of his arms swell and tighten. Then, as Faulkner had hoped, he put the temptation aside.

"If Mr. Bonnaffan apologizes it will be quite sufficient, sir," he answered quietly.

But though Big Ben apologized, he still kept a watchful eye on Jack, honestly convinced that the boy, because of his proficiency at drills, was not disciplined severely enough by the yearlings. He remembered Jack as a daring, high-tempered youngster always ready to pick a quarrel either on his own or another's account, nor had the lad ever tried to disguise his scorn of Big Ben, who from his age and size should rightly have been the leader of the garrison boys, instead of which they

were each and every one at the beck and call of Jack Stirling.

But it was not from a spirit of retaliation for fancied wrongs in the past that Bonnaffan made Stirling's life a burden those first few weeks in camp. It was because he honestly believed the boy should be disciplined, for only in melodrama, after all, does the villain recognize his own villainy and persecute the hero with malevolent intent, as in real life he is much more apt to think of himself in the rôle of a knight-errant and is pained and surprised when public opinion fails to applaud his appearance, and the gallery greets him with hisses.

So despite the protestations of Faulkner, and quite confident he was simply doing his duty, Bonnaffan went calmly ahead trying to break Jack's spirit; though, to be sure, he was not above playing yearling tricks on the boy, such as appearing suddenly at the door of his tent and asking him a string of foolish questions. These, Stirling was obliged to answer with great gravity and respect, standing stiffly at attention the while. Also Bonnaffan waited with no little impatience Jack's first night on guard, for in those days that was as jolly a time for the upper classmen as it

was painful for the plebe, who had to go through a lot of unfamiliar red tape, the older cadets bothering him until he was almost crazy.

While some of this "deviling" was actually essential to a man's understanding of his duties, a great deal of it was farcical, wherein the sentinel challenged anything from Benedict Arnold's lost and wandering soul, to the ghost of a mosquito slain on the Superintendent's left ear.

For example, a dozen people of high rank would appear on the post simultaneously, so that the poor plebe would be at a loss which to advance first, and in spite of himself would let unrecognized persons, without the countersign, come within the prescribed ten feet of him, or cross his post unchallenged. Indeed, Big Bartholomew Bayard, pestered half out of his wits that first night on historic Number Three, refused to let the Superintendent himself by until he had called the corporal of the guard to recognize him, a proceeding which won for Bartholomew the sobriquet of Chevalier Bayard, without fear and without reproach.

But it was a lucky plebe who got through that first night without some military blunder or other, such as allowing himself to be surprised by two

parties advancing upon him at the same time; or forgetting to take a charge bayonet when challenging, as was proper under the old guard manual; or allowing a superior officer to wait while he advanced one of lower grade. Or, perhaps, some waggish yearling could induce him on one pretext or other to leave his post; or, worse still, relinquish his rifle; while if he had arrested all the "suspicious persons prowling about the camp," or "all parties to a disorder occurring on or near his post," he would have had his hands more than full.

For Jack Stirling that first night on guard held no terrors, as he knew his orders and special orders backwards and forwards. He could say them, when necessary, with the addition of "sir" after each word, and he could sing them to the air of the "Star Spangled Banner" or "Yankee Doodle;" notwithstanding which a party of yearlings, headed by Ben Bonnaffan, of course, decided to throw him into the Fort Clinton ditch, right off Number Three post, where many generations of plebe sentinels have been foully dealt with.

That Stirling, who had views of his own on the sacredness of sentinel duty, made the upper classmen respect a bayonet even in the hands of a

plebe, was a foregone conclusion; and he walked the rest of his rainy tour unmolested, a discoloured eye and badly wrenched shoulder being the only reminders of his night of terror.

Fortunately for the upper classmen concerned, the affair never leaked out, though Ben Bonnaffan was laid up for a week afterward with a sore leg. This the good natured old doctor dressed and bandaged with never a question as to how the wound was received, while the other men hurt in the scuffle, including Stirling himself, were treated in camp by a member of the yearling class who had attended a medical college two years before. That the plebe sentinel in reporting the matter to the corporal of the guard, as he was obliged to officially, had not exposed the hazers made him very popular with the upper classmen, while all felt that he had been right in not allowing himself to be disarmed and thrown into the ditch.

As for Ben Bonnaffan, his first day out of the hospital he hobbled to Stirling's tent, and Stirling, seeing him standing there, was on his feet in an instant, stiffly at attention as became a well trained plebe in the presence of his superior.

But Bonnaffan's pasty face went suddenly red,

as, stooping to enter the tent, he mumbled an almost incoherent:

"Oh, cut it out Jack, old man, cut it out. I'm enough ashamed of myself as it is. I — you — oh, Jack, how could you have been so decent after the way I've hounded you all summer? I don't feel as if I could ever hold up my head again."

It was Stirling's turn to redden, and he did it thoroughly from forehead to chin.

"Why, I didn't do more than any one else would have done, Mr. Bonnaffan," he began, but Bonnaffan interrupted with a choking:

"Please don't 'Mister' me again, Jack, as long as you live," and then in answer to the look of incredulous amazement on Stirling's face, "that is, if you're willing to be my friend after all that's happened this summer."

Of course Stirling met him more than half way, and from that time on Ben Bonnaffan became Jack's staunch ally if, indeed, Jack needed one, and frankly confessed he had made a mistake in his estimate of the boy's character. He even went so far as to state that he, himself, must have been at fault in those old Montana days and not Jack, who was doubtless a much finer youngster than he had given him credit for being, Ben's

scale for weighing people and things having a different balance after three years at the Academy.

In fact Bonnaffan and Stirling became such cronies that on the eventful morning when it was rumoured plebes would come up for colour sentinels, it was in Bonnaffan's "spooniest" white trousers Jack won the distinction, Ben himself having held the garments that not a single crease should mar their pristine freshness, while Bayard and Tom Winthrop lowered their tent-mate into them with elaborate caution, Jack, meanwhile being the pink of clean perfection from closely cropped hair to shining boots. As for his rifle, it had been polished so beautifully the night before that the steel parts were like so many mirrors and the walnut stock glowed like new.

Earlier in the summer the plebes had helped different yearlings "bone colour sentinel," so they knew exactly what was expected of them as to clothes and accoutrements; though when it came to a toss-up between half a dozen men as to which was the most soldierly, not only in appearance but in drill, and the plebes were put through the manual, most of them were so over-

anxious to obey that they were apt to fall into the trap of endeavouring to come to a support arms from an order arms or a reverse from a right shoulder, either of which was rank heresy according to Upton.

But Jack Stirling knew his manual well enough to remain rigidly in one position, whenever the command was not according to the tactics of that day, while the classmate who had shown his ignorance swallowed his disappointment as best he could. For beside the honour of guarding the battalion colours laid over stacked arms on the Colour Line, the three sentinels chosen had no night work, and on being relieved from duty were free to go where they pleased "on limits," in addition to which they had the regular old guard privileges on the following day. And so it was that every cadet private, irrespective of class, "boned colours" each tour on guard, and looked with jaundiced eyes on the immaculate three who attained that distinction.

From the head of the company street Bonnaffan watched "his plebe" successfully carry off colours that first morning, and felt much as Donnelly might have felt in similar circumstances.

"He's a credit to the Corps," Ben thought to

himself, "and a credit to the old regiment, too." Then, limping slightly from the wound in his leg, he walked away, ashamed to remember that he had led the party which tried to throw Stirling into the Fort Clinton ditch his first night on guard.

CHAPTER NINE

Hazing that did not interfere with his military duties, Stirling accepted in good part, and many an evening galloped wildly up and down the company street on a broomstick, shooting back over his shoulder at imaginary Indians who were chasing him, Marie Harding's vivid description of a similar happening in Jack's boyhood on the plains, giving the yearlings material for this nonsense.

Then, too, in company with other plebes he would be ordered to remove a log from the company street, this log being a toothpick which six husky fellows had much difficulty in lifting from the ground, groaning and heaving as they finally got it on their shoulders and moved slowly away, staggering under its weight. Or, again, he would be called upon to sing a song, "smile by the numbers," make love to a pillow, or tell some incredible tale of Indian warfare in the West, one of these yarns being about the time he was

killed and scalped on the streets of Chicago by a wooden Indian in front of a cigar store.

When it was discovered that Stirling had a very good bass voice, he was excused from much of the nonsensical hazing and found himself in great demand at all the camp formations, even appearing in company with a half dozen other plebes at the Colour Line Entertainment given on the twenty-fifth August, when he sang a ballad of soldier life written expressly for him by one of the yearling class, a martial song in which were certain sly digs anent the duty of a sentinel. This occasioned much laughter and cheering among the cadet contingent of the audience, though no one else saw anything particularly amusing about it, with the exception of the old doctor, who was seized with a violent fit of coughing at that particular part of the performance.

Little Riggs' hazing consisted for the most part of absurd allusions to his father's position in the Navy and his own six months at the Naval Academy, though he seemed to enjoy as much as the spectators rowing imaginary boats with toothpicks for oars; saving stranded mariners; and making love to mermaids, both mermaids

and mariners being represented by fat commissary pillows.

"Mr. Riggs, sir," the yearlings would call, "it is striking eight bells on the mizzen-mast, sir," for every landlubber when talking of nautical matters will drag in "eight bells" and "mizzen-masts" somehow or other. Whereupon Riggs, with a cheerful "Aye, aye, sir," performed the feat of turning himself into a lighthouse, a fog signal, and a whistling buoy, the lighthouse being the simple uncovering of his shock of red hair, while some direful noises represented the whistling buoy and fog signals. Then followed sea yarns and a rollicking song or two with many a "Yo, heave ho!" and "Shiver my timbers," interspersed, while his sailor's horn pipe was so good that its fame spread even to the Professors' Row on the other side of the parade ground.

Of course there was the usual fetching and carrying for upper classmen that summer; the cleaning of rifles; filling of water buckets; lowering of tent flaps; making of "lemo," and drinking of the same; piling of bedding, and straightening up of tents. As it was done fifty years before, as it would probably be done now, were hazing not entirely dispensed with at the Academy, the

upper classmen would call a plebe to his tent and say:

" You will please take notice, Mister, that my tent-mate and I do not ask you to do anything for us. Bear in mind that I wouldn't have you wait on us for any consideration, so if a ' Tac ' should ' hive ' you carrying water or making beds you can truthfully say you were not requested to do it. You understand? Yes? Well, please, Mister, I don't wish any water this morning, neither could I allow you, sir, to demean yourself by cleaning my rifle."

At which the poor plebe would salute respectfully, to return a moment later with a bucket full to overflowing, when he would repair to his own tent and clean the aforementioned rifle. In like manner, some other helpless wight would pile the bedding, sweep out the tent, and generally straighten things up.

According to their individual natures men hazed. Some yearlings were freezingly polite; some were rough; some were sarcastic; some, while requiring the utmost respect, treated the plebes as if they were human beings like themselves; some showed such a hearty good will and liberality, that under their gruff " Mister " could

be felt the beginning of a mutual friendship; while all were more or less liberal to their special duty-man in the matter of collars, belts, white gloves, and the like, nor was a drill master apt to haze the men in his own squad.

Some of these drill masters, strict as they had to be, were very popular among the plebes, Cadet Corporal Graham being especially well liked by his company. In fact, big Bartholomew Bayard fell prey to such a case of hero worship, that whenever Graham's name was mentioned, he would flush all over his freckled face and try to throw his shoulders further back, his chest further out in feeble imitation of that young gentleman's military carriage.

To Graham, Bayard was simply the awkwardest man not only in the company, but in his own particular awkward squad, and when he happened to witness poor Bayard getting into his first dress-coat he had laughed till he ached, for even with the help of several classmates, some of whom squeezed in his waist while the others tugged to button the coat around him, Bayard had gasped, and panted, and perspired, till the picture he made standing there, red, hot, and uncomfortable, a martyr to the West Point slimness of waist,

would have convulsed the Superintendent himself.

Poor old Bayard was the type of man who spends his life in useless sacrifice, and was so conscientious that on more than one occasion he had reported himself, always magnifying his faults into vices, his peccadilloes into faults.

Everything he did had a farcical element about it. Once at the swimming lesson, despite the fact he could only float, he had dived from the bank to save a classmate, who did not need saving, and of course, being Bayard, he dove in such shallow water that he brought up nothing from the bottom but a very sore head and a mouthful of sand. Again, he was talking to his tent-mates, Stirling and Winthrop, one day, when Stirling happened to notice that Bayard's shoes were untied. Still talking, Bayard stooped to repair the damage, and just as he raised his head a couple of yearlings appeared at the door of the tent, whereupon Bayard sprang to attention, only to fall flat on his face at the yearlings' feet, for all unconsciously he had tied his shoes together.

It almost seemed at times as if he were destined to go through life a target for the jokes of Fate, a butt for her ridicules, a human epitome of the

ludicrous, while Cadet Corporal Graham was quoted as having said that Bayard made so many bulls and blunders he must have been born under the constellation of Taurus.

Although Bayard knew the corporal's opinion of him, he still aspired to great things, and his dreams at night were filled with saving the yearling's life at great bodily peril to himself, while his days were spent in emerging from one difficulty only to be engulfed by another.

One hot afternoon in July from his tent across the company street, Bayard watched the corporal at work on some official papers, for in addition to being a drill master over plebes, Graham had been given some special reports to copy. This work carried with it the proud distinction of running lights up to twelve o'clock, not to mention the luxury of having a chair and table in his tent, and being excused from all guard duty.

Polishing away at some upper classman's rifle, Bayard watched his idol furtively and wished, as he had wished so often, that he might be given a chance to serve him at any cost whatever. To have looked at Bayard, no one would have credited him with such burning thoughts, for his freckled face was red and greasy, with one long smutch

across it from the gun he was cleaning, this slipping more than once through his clumsy fingers to the huge disgust of his rather irascible tentmate, Winthrop.

Across the street, Bobby Graham, utterly unaware of the plebe's admiration, was grumbling to himself that yearling camp was not all his imagination had pictured it, for instead of the easy time he had anticipated on leaving barracks he had to write reports until late every night, not to mention drilling plebes three hours a day, and the " grossest " plebes that had ever come to the Academy, at that.

To be sure, his special detail excused him from guard duty, but in such unbearably hot weather it was hard to work overtime as he was doing, especially when all his classmates were lying around the camp sleeping the drowsy afternoon away, or else sauntering around Flirtation Walk with one of the numerous jolly girls on the post.

Time and again he stopped to wipe his moist hands that they might not blur the perfection of the closely written pages before him, and time and again he fanned himself feebly, gasping at the heat of the small tent.

It was not until late afternoon that his work

was finally completed, and with a sigh of relief he pushed it from him and started to get up, only to have the sigh merge into a gasp of dismay, for by a sudden awkward movement he had upset the ink bottle, and before he could prevent it a black, sluggish stream was drowning hours of hard work.

With the dullness of despair, Graham proceeded to mop up the ink from the table, and a moment later he was busily engaged on a new set of reports, his straight brows drawn together in an ominous frown.

Suddenly conscious of a shambling step passing the tent, he looked up to discover the awkwardest man in his plebe squad, long, lank Bartholomew Bayard walking past, and walking as no plebe has a right to walk, with swinging arms and chin down on his chest, for he evidently felt that the hour and the heat of the afternoon protected him from keen yearling eyes.

Angered at the man's slouching gait, and still smarting over the destruction of his papers, Graham was on his feet in an instant. Only that morning he had almost despaired of Bayard in the manual of arms, for the least clumsiness in a man's make-up shows plainer, perhaps, in

the handling of a gun than in any other way, and Bayard was as clumsy as a Newfoundland puppy, all feet and legs, with an enormous head that might have been put on his shoulders by mistake.

Reaching the door of his tent at a single bound, Graham called after the retreating figure:

"Mr. Bayard, oh, Mr. Bayard, come here a moment, sir."

Mr. Bayard, throwing back his shoulders and holding up his head, swung around in the slow way so exasperating to his alert young instructor. Moreover, the shape of Mr. Bayard's huge mouth and its prominent teeth gave the impression that he was smiling, even when nothing was more remote from his thoughts, this chronic air of mirthfulness costing him much in demerits during his stay at the Academy. Just now that unconscious display of dentition was the proverbial straw that broke the back of the cadet corporal's temper.

"Wipe off that smile, Mr. Bayard," he howled wrathfully as the plebe approached his tent. "What are you celebrating anyway? Haven't you learned yet to control your risibles? Don't you know it's insulting to grin like a Cheshire cat in the presence of your superiors?"

Mr. Bayard obediently pulled his long upper lip over the offending teeth, but even then he had the appearance of fairly exploding with repressed mirth, the radiating lines about the honest blue eyes contributing to an effect of jollity much at variance with his feelings.

It was a hot day and Bartholomew was tired, but he went through some much needed exercises at the instigation of his drill master with an alacrity which warmed that young gentleman's heart and made him quite forget his ill temper, for it was plain to be seen that Bayard really wanted to learn; though Graham might have been surprised had he known that the hero worshipping plebe considered it an honour to double step for the cadet corporal, and had shambled by his tent in the faint hope that his hero might notice him. Up to that time Graham's attitude toward plebes had been one of kingly condescension that held them off at arm's length, more the pose of the first classman than the yearling, and one which made him seem in their eyes but little lower than the Superintendent himself.

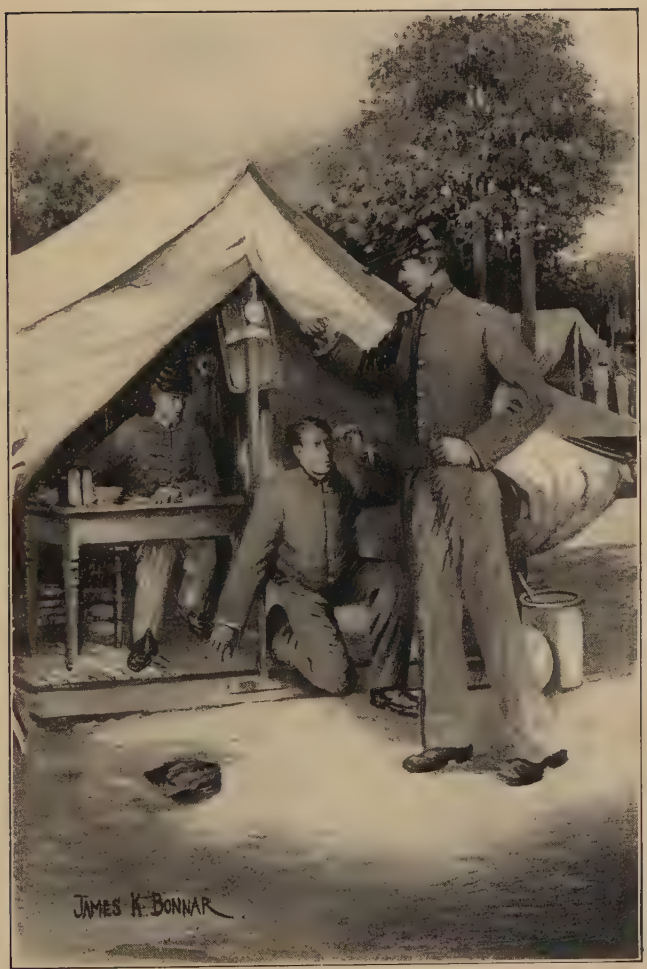
That he had stooped to haze him, filled poor Bayard's heart so full of joy that he finally found it hard work to keep his prominent teeth

hidden; the long upper lip pulled down to cover them, the deep set eyes, and the rather insignificant nose, combining in an effect nothing short of simian. Bob Graham noticed the resemblance, and changed the performance to a series of monkey tricks, Bayard entering into the spirit of the thing with the utmost good nature, and adding greatly to the fun by chattering and scratching himself in approved monkey fashion.

The autocrat showed his appreciation.

"If you only learn to handle a gun as well as you act the monkey, Mr. Bayard, you'll be made a corporal next June," and then remembering that it was almost time for afternoon inspection, he dismissed the plebe with a patronizing: "You may go now, Mr. Bayard, or rather, Mr. Crowley, for you can certainly make yourself into the 'spi't'n' image' of that noble beast in Central Park."

In a moment Bayard was on his feet, backing respectfully towards the tent opening, when the cadet corporal decided he should leave in a manner more befitting his comical face. So the great raw boned country boy got down on his hands and knees again, only too pleased that the object of his admiration found pleasure in his antics.



"IN A MOMENT THE PLEBE HAD RECOVERED HIMSELF."

As he emerged from the tent on all fours, he ran full tilt into the officer in charge, who for some unknown reason was making his rounds slightly ahead of time.

In a moment the plebe had recovered himself, and after a rather ludicrous attempt at picking something out of the dust of the company street, a palpable effort at concealing he was down on his hands and knees for the purpose of being hazed, he stood erect and with surprising presence of mind stuffed the imaginary thing just picked up into the front of his blouse. Then, standing stiffly to one side, he saluted the tactical officer.

It was Lieutenant Truitt of B Company, and his face showed that he was puzzled as to whether or not he had " hived " a case of hazing, but he took the plebe's name before dismissing him, adding that in fifteen minutes he should expect Mr. Bayard to report to him in person at the head of B Company street. Then he stepped to the door of Graham's tent.

The cadet corporal, deeply engrossed in writing out a new set of reports, looked up expectantly as a shadow fell across his paper. Upon seeing the young officer standing there, he sprang to attention.

"Are you alone, sir?" snapped the tactical officer sharply.

"I am, sir," answered the cadet corporal with an admirable show of surprise.

"Have any upper classmen been in your tent within the last half hour?" went on the inexorable voice.

"No, sir."

"Has any fourth classman been here?"

"Yes, sir," replied the yearling, very slowly this time.

"And his name, Mr. Graham?"

"Bayard, sir. Mr. Bayard of A Company."

The officer started to ask another question, hesitated, and a moment later was swinging off towards his own tent, leaving the yearling still standing at attention.

Suddenly poor Graham collapsed in a huddled heap on his locker, for he knew that to be detected in hazing meant either dismissal, or at the very least, reduction to the ranks.

At last he pulled himself together and started over towards B Company, meaning to confer with his friend Burnham. Half way there, he saw Mr. Bayard of the fourth class walking in the same direction, his shoulders stiffly back, his little

fingers on the seams of his trousers, his blue eyes straight to the front.

The cadet corporal halted and watched with visible anxiety the course taken by the plebe.

As he feared, Mr. Bayard halted in front of Lieutenant Truitt's tent.

Stifling something strangely like a sob, Graham turned on his heel and retraced his steps towards his own tent.

A court-martial was inevitable now, and hardly less inevitable was the fact that he would be found guilty of hazing, which meant either a reduction to the ranks or — dismissal!

CHAPTER TEN

MEANWHILE Cadet Private Bayard of the fourth class stood in front of Lieutenant Truitt's tent.

After what seemed hours of waiting, the young officer looked up and called out a gruff:

"Come in, Mr. Bayard."

Bayard obeyed with alacrity, his freckled face one burning blush, his big hands shaking at his sides.

The lieutenant looked him over very gravely.

"Mr. Bayard," he began, "the Tactical Department is anxious to put a stop to any unauthorized interference with new cadets, and while there have been no complaints from your class, still I cannot but feel there has been some tendency on the part of the older men to do more than drill and discipline you. Am I right, Mr. Bayard."

The plebe was speechless, and the lieutenant, seeing that he did not want to answer so general an accusation, came down to the case in question.

"As I inspected A Company street just now,

it was apparent that you were being hazed by Mr. Graham of the third class. Will you kindly tell me what he compelled you to do for him? "

Still Bayard hesitated, at which the lieutenant had something to say on the necessity of breaking up hazing at West Point, not that he considered it was ever carried to the extent known in other schools and colleges, but that the Military Academy, belonging as it did to the public, had to consider the sentiments of the people on the subject. It was the Superintendent's desire to stamp out the practice entirely, which could only be done by making an example of any one caught interfering with new cadets.

As Bayard still had nothing to say, the officer repeated his question as to whether or not the plebe had been hazed that afternoon by the cadet corporal, and this time he spoke more sharply.

Bayard hesitated a moment, then remembering how a boy in the village school at home had lied to save a classmate, and how he had become the hero of the hour because of this evasion of the truth, he let his big, honest eyes rest on the lieutenant's puzzled face, and after a great gulp or two blurted out a husky:

"No, sir, Mr. Graham wasn't hazing me."

"*What!*" ejaculated the tactical officer, who had evidently expected an affirmative reply. "Do you mean to say that Mr. Graham was not hazing you this afternoon when you came out of his tent on your hands and knees? What were you doing that for, may I ask?"

"Why, I — I just dropped my handkerchief, and stooping to pick it up sort of stumbled. That was all."

The tactical officer surveyed the plebe coldly.

"And you mean to tell me that Mr. Graham did not ask you to do anything that might be considered undignified?"

The plebe, now very white, shook his head firmly.

"No, sir, Mr. Graham didn't make me do anything at all, sir. I just went into the tent to ask him a question about drill. He's always been very good to me, Mr. Graham has, and treats me like a brother, sir."

The tactical officer, knowing how strongly the line of demarcation has to be drawn between old and new cadets to insure discipline, looked more mystified than ever, but in duty bound he went on with the usual questions.

"So Mr. Graham did not address you in an insulting or a bullying way?"

"No, sir."

"And his manner was not in the least threatening? He didn't give you orders of any description? Or compel you to go through exercises of any kind?"

Poor Bayard, although remembering too well the "jay bird step" he had practised in Graham's tent, shook his head miserably.

"No, sir, he didn't force me to do anything at all, just answered my questions about the drill, and told me to call on him whenever I needed help," and Bayard said it with a firmness born of the belief that he was doing right to shield a fellow cadet.

Once again the lieutenant fairly held those honest blue eyes in his.

"That will do, Mr. Bayard," he ventured at last, and Mr. Bayard, in spite of the fact that he thought he was doing right, coloured up under the lieutenant's evident belief in his integrity.

Returning to his tent, he thrilled with anticipatory pleasure at the thought of telling Graham how he had saved him. What a hero he would be!

Not only with the yearlings, but with the whole Corps, for Graham was a universal favourite. He would be modest when Graham thanked him. He would try to pass it off with a wave of the hand, a careless "Why, that was nothing! A man would do anything for his friends!" much as the boy at home had answered the praise of his school fellows. He told no one of the interview with the tactical officer, preferring to let the Corps hear of it through other channels, but he tasted the joy of self-sacrifice and found it sweet to the palate. At last he had proved his worth, not only to his own class but to the yearlings, as well, not to mention those mighty first classmen who up to that time had not so much as deigned to notice him.

From now on he would be a marked figure. He had saved a third classman from certain dismissal, or, at the very least, a loss of official rank, and he had a premonition that in the future he and Graham would be more than friends, closer than brothers.

Nor did he have long to wait before telling his story, as the cadet corporal sent for him after the battalion's return from supper that night, and the plebe, as excited as a small boy walking up

for the first prize in Sunday-school, stepped across the company street.

Hungry as Bayard was for affection, his famished soul in his eyes, he told Graham the story of how he had saved him, dwelling first on the lieutenant's questions which, subtle as they were, had not been successful in forcing an incriminating admission from his lips, but Graham meanwhile kept strangely silent. This Bayard interpreted as regret for his former harsh tone towards him; so with a proper Christian spirit, he next proceeded to let Mr. Graham understand that he bore him no ill will, and would do as much for him again should it be necessary. Finally in his big, shy, awkward way, he congratulated Graham on not losing his official scalp.

The cadet corporal let the plebe tell his story to the end, jogging his memory occasionally when he seemed unable to exactly recall what the lieutenant had said or what he had replied, but when Bayard finally reached his last period and listened for the word of praise he so confidently expected, he was surprised to see that the object of his adoration was regarding him with an expression anything but kindly. At last Graham spoke, and his voice sounded as if he were giv-

ing orders at drill, sharp, decisive, almost harsh.

"Mr. Bayard," he began, and every word cut into the poor plebe's heart like a whip-lash, "Mr. Bayard, sir, do you realize that your conduct has been unbecoming a cadet and a gentleman? Do you understand that you have made a false official statement? Do you appreciate the fact that you could be 'cut' by the Corps for your action to-day?"

Bayard stared at the cadet corporal incredulously.

"But — but I did it to save you," he stammered, "to prevent them from court-martialling you. It would have meant the loss of your chevrons — perhaps dismissal— "

The cadet corporal flicked an infinitesimal speck of dust from the new chevrons and smiled a queer little smile that made the plebe very uncomfortable.

"Mr. Bayard," he said not unkindly, "the cadet code of honour is a strange one, perhaps. It is also very strict, and first and foremost in that code is truthfulness."

Bayard started and a slow colour spread over his homely, freckled face. He moistened his dry lips to speak, but no words came, and to his horror

the quick tears sprang to his eyes. Graham picked up a pen from the table before him and rolled it back and forth between the palms of his hands. Then he went on talking, as if in answer to Bayard's unspoken thought:

"Of course I realize you — er —" he hesitated on the word "lied," "you did it to save me, and I also know that by the standard of many schools you did a manly thing, but judging it by West Point's code it was a false official statement, the worst crime in our calendar. If a yearling had done the same thing, either to save himself or another, he'd have been 'cut' by the whole Corps. With a plebe, it's different. He couldn't be expected to know any better, and — your motive was good." For a moment the stern eyes twinkled with something akin to amusement, the chevalier's many acts of heroism throughout plebe camp having already gone down in history for future generations of cadets.

"Also I like the spirit that prompted you to stand by me after my merciless hazing of this afternoon. It shows you're made of good stuff, Mr. Bayard, and however this affair turns out I shall always remember it." Then before Bayard could edge in so much as a grateful glance he went on:

"Of course you must see Lieutenant Truitt as soon as possible and retract your statements of this afternoon. You must let him know it was a misapprehension on your part, that you didn't understand the rules of the game, and all that!"

Bayard stared at his companion incredulously, forgetting for the moment that he was a high ranking corporal and not a plebe like himself.

"What?" he cried. "Are you going to make me go back to the officer in charge and eat my words at the cost of your chevrons, your possible cadetship? Why, what good can it do now? I've had my lesson, and you're safe! Why not let it rest there?"

The cadet corporal threw the plebe a scornful glance.

"If you stay here a few weeks longer, Mister, you'll understand why. Do you suppose I'd wear chevrons at the cost of another man's honour?"

"But — nobody else knows it," stammered Bayard.

Graham got to his feet so quickly that his chair fell over.

"*I* know it!" he thundered. "And I know, too, you've made a false official statement, Mr.

Bayard. It's up to you to make it right, sir. If you don't, I shall. That'll do, sir," and with the return of his old manner Graham had dismissed the plebe.

A few moments later and Bayard was closeted with Lieutenant Truitt. It did not take long to tell his story.

" I'm sorry, sir," he wound up, " I didn't realize I was guilty of conduct unbecoming a cadet and a gentleman. I thought I was doing the manly thing to shield him, sir. It isn't easy for me to lie, but he — he was furious about it. He said the Corps would cut me if they ever found it out. He said it was a false official statement. He told me — "

" He? " interrupted the lieutenant tersely. " To whom are you referring, Mr. Bayard? "

" Why, to Mr. Graham, sir," he stammered. " He told me I'd done wrong. He said the code of honour at West Point wouldn't allow a man to lie, even to shield a friend. He said he wouldn't wear chevrons at the cost of another man's honour, and that I was to come and tell you the whole story, or he would do it himself."

The officer in charge looked up quickly.

" Mr. Graham was quite right," he answered

in a low tone, almost as if he were thinking aloud, "and you did well to report yourself, Mr. Bayard." Then, more gravely still, "Since you were fairly unversed in West Point customs, and considering that as soon as you realized the enormity of a false official statement, you came freely and voluntarily to make amends for it, I shall accept your last statement as the one you desired to make originally, feeling certain this incident will show you that a good soldier needs more than courage and subordination in his make-up. Honour is the sum-total of West Point life, and no evasion of the truth is permissible. As Mr. Graham told you, a man detected in a falsehood would be shunned by the Corps as a moral leper, for a cadet's word of honour is as binding as another man's oath." The plebe lowered his blue eyes to the dapper little officer's face.

"I understand, sir," he returned solemnly, "and I thank you for being so lenient with me."

The lieutenant answered curtly, and by a gesture dismissed the cadet, but Bayard still lingered at attention.

"Well — well, what is it?" demanded the officer sharply.

Bayard flushed at his own temerity.

"Mr. Graham, sir," he breathed, "can't you let him off, too, sir?"

The officer's mouth twitched to repress a smile, but he answered gravely:

"Mr. Bayard, it is not customary at West Point for the Tactical Department to discuss such matters with cadets, but in this one instance I think I shall tell you that Mr. Graham will have to face court-martial charges."

Bayard started violently.

"You see," the lieutenant went on in good-natured explanation, "I caught Mr. Graham red-handed, and must report him although, in the circumstances, I dislike doing so exceedingly."

The plebe's mouth, in a vain effort to control its trembling, drew down comically over the big teeth, but the distressed look in the blue eyes showed only too plainly that he had no desire to laugh. The lieutenant saw he was really deeply moved and said in a reassuring way:

"As I infer from your interest in Mr. Graham, his hazing could not have been of a brutal character. This you will be given an opportunity to prove before the court, and I doubt if the sentence

will be more severe than to reduce him to ranks and confine him to the limits of the encampment during the remainder of the summer."

To Bayard this seemed a most inadequate return for the cadet corporal's little fun at his expense, but when the sentence of the court was published at parade some three weeks later the ex-corporal seemed to think differently, for that night on the return of the battalion from supper, Private Graham of the third class appeared at the opening of Private Bayard's tent.

Instantly the plebe was on his feet at attention, but Graham, looking around to see that he was not observed, came forward with outstretched hand.

"Bayard," he began, "you're a brick!"

The plebe tried to prove it by turning the colour of that article in its natural state. He had been called Bayard by an upper classman, Bayard without the objectionable Mr.

"Yes, sir," went on the ex-corporal, "if it hadn't been for your testimony at the court-martial, and your making light of everything, as you did, saying you really enjoyed it and all that, I'd be on my way back to Boston now. You were a brick from the very start, old man,

though your method of shielding me may have been open to criticism."

Bayard blushed still more furiously, and Graham, a little ill at ease himself, thrust a tarnished old belt buckle into the plebe's hand.

"Do you see that buckle, Bayard?" he demanded, with a boyish avoidance of anything like sentiment, "Well, whenever an upper classman requests your service during the remainder of the summer, just yank out that buckle and start to cleaning it hard. See? Mind, you're cleaning it for Mr. Graham of the third class, and don't let anything interfere with it. I want it completed by the time we break up camp and march back to barracks. Do you understand?"

Just then a second yearling loomed up in the doorway, but Graham went on talking to the plebe, telling him the buckle must be polished till it could be used for a mirror and then, turning to the yearling, he exclaimed:

"Why, hello, Scotty, looking for some one to clean your rifle? Well, you've got to look further than this, my boy, for I've just engaged Mr. Bayard, here, to polish up my belt buckle. What about Mr. Van Norsdell? They say he can make a rifle look like new," and arm in arm, the upper

classmen went off in search of Van Norsdell, leaving Bayard standing in the middle of the floor, staring stupidly at a belt buckle in his hand and scarce realizing that it meant for him a talisman against any form of hazing for the remainder of his plebe camp.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

As might have been expected, the officers of the Anti-Hazing Society, Schuyler Van Norsdell, little Lampton, and Tom Winthrop, came in for a goodly share of discipline that summer, the older cadets having an unerring instinct for those fourth classmen most in need of that primary lesson for the young soldier, subordination; and while Lampton and Van Norsdell emerged from the ordeal somewhat chastened in spirit, Winthrop fretted at the restrictions and several times ran amuck. This resulted in his hurting nobody but himself, and attaining thereby the reputation of being the " B. J. est " plebe in camp, with the possible exception of little Riggs, whose " B. J. ity " was of such a comical, unpremeditated nature that it won him friends in the Corps, while Winthrop's was of the surly, unwilling kind that made him an Ishmaelite even among his own classmates.

To Jack Stirling and Bartholomew Bayard,

who shared his tent, Winthrop's conduct was incomprehensible, but on more than one occasion they helped him out of difficulties, especially the confinements which would have resulted from his carelessness in "policing" the tent his week in charge, Winthrop having a sublime disregard for that West Point rule of a place for everything and everything in its place. Moreover, he had conceived the idea before entering the Academy, that his father's position and great wealth would protect him from the menial duty of cleaning camp along with men whose immediate ancestors were not unfamiliar with manual labour, for it was quite beyond Winthrop's comprehension that the son of the Secretary of State should be expected to sweep the company street, pick up feathers from the general parade after one of the numerous pillow fights there, or mix "lemo" for some lazy yearling.

It also hurt his pride to pile bedding and carry water for a man who, to his positive knowledge, was the son of an obscure farmer in the West; and he felt it an insult that a young gentleman of his distinguished ancestry should march in ranks, shoulder by shoulder, with men who, as far as their social positions went, were not fit to black his boots.

He had not dreamed, from the dashing young officers met in Washington, that West Pointers could ever be chosen from any but the best families. Yet he had been told that Joe Fitch, one of the hop managers of the first class, and it must be admitted a very gentlemanly fellow, was the son of a day labourer in Milwaukee, while Crawford and Larrabee, two very prominent yearlings, were country boys right off a farm; and the great Faulkner's most intimate friend, good natured Jim Little, had the strangest relatives now visiting on the post, regular guys they were in clothes that might have been an excellent fit for somebody else, and of a fashion long past.

In his own class, before the uniform that levelled them all to the same grade was adopted, he could not but note the preponderance of raw-boned, awkward country boys, while one of his tentmates was surely not a fit associate for a gentleman, though Jack Stirling, whose ancestry was beyond question, seemed very good to the fellow. Indeed, Stirling was actually shocked at Winthrop's most sensible suggestion that between them they could hire Bayard to do the "police work" in their own tent, Bayard evidently being accustomed to such drudgery, while he

and Jack were obviously not in the least fitted for it.

Horrified as Stirling had been at this premeditated violation of the 36th Article of War, which provides that no soldier shall hire another to do his duty for him, he still tried from that kindliness of heart which always puts the best possible construction on other people's acts, to interpret Winthrop's suggestion as sheer ignorance of army customs, and in his boyish way he tried to help his tent-mate to a better realization of the life ahead of him.

" But I'm just as good as that stuck-up little Bobby Graham," Winthrop had protested gloomily. " His grandfather and mine were friends and equals, yet he treats me like the dust beneath his feet. I can stand hazing better than that ' keep your distance ' manner of his, and he hasn't come down off his stilts a bit since his well merited reduction to the ranks. Oh, it makes me furious to have to spring to attention every time he appears at the tent opening, and call him ' sir ' and ' Mister ' and all that. I don't see, considering that we're both of equally good stock, and that my father's position to-day is even better than his father's, why we couldn't be friends. I

don't care to be treated as his social inferior when he knows that I'm every whit as good as he is," and the proud nostrils curled slightly as the handsome dark eyes glared defiance at the high handed manner of the former yearling corporal.

Jack suppressed a smile.

"Of course you're just as good as Graham," he answered patiently, "but if the line wasn't sharply drawn between plebes and upper classmen they couldn't drill or discipline us properly. You recognize that as well as I do."

Still Winthrop kicked at the pricks, and as the summer wore on he found the rigid discipline more unbearable, the daily routine more irksome, the lack of intercourse between the two upper classes and his own more galling. The very sound of the drums and fifes got on his nerves, and he hated the thunder of the sea-coast guns and the roar of light artillery at morning drills, no less than he did the plebes' mock artillery work, it seeming such a childish thing to go through all the motions of loading, aiming, and firing without any resulting noise.

Where others heard strains of martial music and saw well drilled, splendidly muscled young men swinging off to this duty or that in perfect

cadence, Winthrop heard the Rogues' March and felt himself one of a chain-gang, sullen, unhappy, resentful. With no love in his heart for the profession of a soldier, and no ambition to do aught with his manifold duties than shirk them, he was as unhappy a plebe as ever depressed his toes or "finned out" on a company street.

Because of some direct disobedience of orders he found himself in arrest more than once that summer, while personal difficulties with upper classmen led to several fights in historic old Fort Clinton, where for many generations cadet quarrels have been settled and lifelong friendships have arisen, phœnix-like, from the ashes of a burned out, fought out, misunderstanding.

The night of the furloughmen's return to camp, Winthrop was on guard and many were the pranks played on him by those merry hearted youngsters, irresponsible after a long summer away from military restraint. But Winthrop, who had of necessity scorned delights and lived laborious days, was in no mood to be badgered by any one, and he kept the corporal of the guard on the jump by calling for assistance every few minutes; though each time the corporal arrived on the scene there would be nobody in sight but the

surly plebe sentinel, who had failed to keep his wits about him and knew as little of his orders as the rawest recruit his first night on guard.

"There's no more hope of Winthrop ever making a soldier than there is of my turning into a ballet dancer," stormed Connelly on his last return to the guard tent where Faulkner, as officer of the day, was preparing to make his rounds. "Why, the man barely understands the limits and extent of his post, let alone his general orders!"

"The furloughmen are probably 'deviling' the life out of him," murmured Faulkner sympathetically, a memory of his own plebe experience in similar circumstances coming back to him vividly.

"Yes, but Raymond of the fourth class is on Number Three and has handled the situation like a veteran. It's because Winthrop is so ignorant of his orders that the furloughmen are giving him trouble."

Without answering, Faulkner stepped out into the night, his grave young face graver than ever with the responsibilities devolving upon him as officer of the day, this dignitary being held ac-

countable for any disturbance in camp or negligence of sentinels.

To be officer of the day is the height of West Point official life, the most responsible duty a cadet can perform and not always a very pleasant one, for with all the glory of having the guard turned out in one's honour and being entitled to the highest salute from sentinels, there is yet more work and responsibility about the position than glory, though not a man in the Corps but longed to be treated by friend and foe with the rigid respect and deference the position demands.

Arrived on Winthrop's post, the officer of the day put him through several tests which showed that the plebe's knowledge of sentry duty was not what it should have been, whereupon he proceeded to instruct Winthrop in his duties, making him stand at a port arms, the while he stumbled through his general orders which that late in the summer he should have known backwards and forwards.

Badgered as he had already been by the furloughmen, and in his ignorance not recognizing that Faulkner, as officer of the day, had a perfect right to put him through his paces, Winthrop

in a sudden uncontrollable rage, gave vent to it by a muttered word or two that sounded strangely like profanity.

Faulkner, properly indignant, though he could scarcely believe his ears, called for the corporal of the guard to relieve the sentinel from duty and take him to the guard-tent. As Connelly came running up, Winthrop repeated whatever he had said, the corporal interpreting it as Faulkner had, while from near by tents a half dozen plebes, including Riggs, Gronna, and Burges of Maine, asked each other in horrified whispers if they had really heard aright, it seeming well nigh incredible that any one could have used profanity to that most exalted person, the officer of the day.

Next morning after guard-mounting, when Winthrop was released from the guard-tent, pending further investigation, the enormity of his offence in having so much as spoken disrespectfully to the officer of the day was made plain to him by Stirling, who had no more than finished when the ominous clink of the cadet adjutant's sword was heard outside the tent. A moment later and Mr. Winthrop of the fourth class was standing rigidly at attention, while he listened to the fateful words that by order of the Commandant placed

him in close arrest. That night at parade a "hefty skin," in the language of the Point, was read out against Mr. Winthrop, the most serious charge being the use of profane language to the officer of the day while Winthrop was serving as a sentinel on post.

If the Corps was horrified and amazed at the charges, it was even more thunder-struck at Winthrop's written explanation, for in it he denied outright that he had used profanity when speaking to Faulkner, and this though eight good men were willing to testify that they had heard him. According to Winthrop, what he really said was that if Faulkner didn't move on he would "ram" him with his bayonet and "yell" for the corporal of the guard, the unconscious rhyming of these words with those Faulkner understood him to have used being as near as he had come to swearing.

Nothing could have been sterner than Faulkner's face as he read this ingenious explanation, and though the corporal of the guard was rather inclined to think that they both might have misunderstood what Winthrop said, a cadet's word of honour never being questioned, the Commandant, on talking the matter over with the first classman, concluded to have charges

preferred against Winthrop, not only for using profanity when a sentinel on post but for making a false official statement.

At the court-martial that followed close upon the Corps' removal to barracks, Winthrop stuck to his original story, after first swearing that he would " tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; " and he was so much in earnest on the witness stand and produced so good an impression on the court by his direct, manly way of answering all questions, that he was acquitted of making a false official statement, and the offence was changed to unbecoming conduct on guard. This saved him to the Academy, his sentence being three months in light prison with extra tours on the area every Saturday afternoon until the following March.

The Corps was in a perfect frenzy of excitement over the whole affair, but divided in opinion, even after the finding of the court was published, as to whether or not Winthrop was guilty. Half the men sided with the popular first classman, who in their eyes could do no wrong, while the other half were inclined to believe that even Faulkner, infallible as he seemed, might have been mistaken.

Fortunately for Winthrop his own class, with the exception of Riggs and his tent-mates Burges of Maine and Gronna of Idaho, were inclined to stand by him. But even as it was, Winthrop felt keenly the disgrace of being cut by the first class, which to a man upheld Faulkner, while many splendid fellows in the other two classes never exchanged a word with the miserable plebe from that day on, except officially. According to those in the study of "heat," their manner was as minus 493 degrees Fahrenheit, and with no chance of thawing even if Winthrop's subsequent honesty, courage, and obedience to authority brought him in first class year the much coveted position of first captain or adjutant.

Easily wounded, like most self-centred people, Winthrop suffered torments at his ostracism, though never by word or look did he show how tight the screws were on.

Even Jack Stirling, who had stood by Winthrop manfully throughout the whole affair, and as evidence of his sincerity had asked Winthrop to share his room for the year, never dreamed that night after night the boy lay on his cot just across the alcove, his hands clenched till the nails bit into the flesh, his teeth gritted together to keep

back the sobs that tore at his throat, while his eyes drearily watched the walls of his room whiten with the coming dawn.

In church on Sunday when he saw that panel on the wall where the name of Benedict Arnold is erased, leaving only the date of his birth and death to testify to the traitor's memory, Winthrop shivered, for he realized that if Arnold's name was erased from the tablet for his attempt to betray West Point into the hands of the enemy, so men were " cut " by the Corps for attempting to lower the high ideals bequeathed to the Academy by those very heroes, whose splendid records illumine for all time the pages of American history.

In the summer Winthrop had regarded the monuments and captured flags, the cannon surrendered by the English at Saratoga, and the guns that had been taken in the Mexican War as relics of great historic interest. Now he recognized them as an ever present incentive and stimulus to noble deeds, on a par with those historic names panelled on the walls of the chapel, names that have helped make the Corps of cadets what it is. For as often happens with a great sorrow or grief or disappointment, Winthrop's eyes were suddenly opened to the true meaning of the life around

him, and as he realized how near he had come to being dishonourably discharged from the Military Academy, he awoke to the fact that the career of a soldier is most desirable, and wondered how he could ever have acted so badly in plebe camp.

It must be admitted that Faulkner was very indignant at the finding of the court, and that he looked upon Winthrop as an unmitigated liar, not fit to associate with cadets and gentlemen.

"I don't see how anybody could have been taken in by such rot," he fumed one day to Graham of the third class. "As if I didn't recognize swearing when I heard it, and then to compound his felony by making a false official statement about it."

"But perhaps you were mistaken, old man," Graham had interposed, "for according to Connelly, you know, Winthrop told an awfully straight story on the witness stand, and no amount of cross examination could shake him. In fact, Connelly says that Winthrop explains so well what he said to you that he — Connelly, I mean — is willing to admit that he might have made a mistake."

"Connelly always was a weather vane," Faulkner growled, "veering with the slightest change of

wind. Not that I doubt for a moment but that he's perfectly honest in what he says, while Winthrop — well, Winthrop was simply lying, that's all."

"But why shouldn't you give poor Winthrop the benefit of the doubt as well as Connelly?" ventured Graham.

"Because there's no doubt in Winthrop's case, Graham. I stood as near him as I am to you now, and considering that he made the remark not once but twice, I ought to know what he said. Those other men know, too, Bobby, but are afraid to trust the evidence of their senses because the coward told so good a lie under oath that they can't believe it's false. Just call on Riggs of his own class, and see what he has to say about it."

"Yes, but Riggs was farther away than were some of the others whose testimony was thrown out at the court-martial," objected Graham.

Faulkner snorted contemptuously.

"Just call on Riggs anyway. He knows the truth as well as Burges of Maine or that red-headed youngster from Idaho, and classmates though they are, they have all three cut Winthrop ever since the court-martial."

"But his room-mate stands by him," persisted

Graham, " and he's one of the finest fellows, not only in his class, but in the Corps."

" Yes," answered Faulkner, " Jack Stirling's of too fine a nature to believe the man lied under oath unless it were proved against him. He didn't hear Winthrop use profanity, and of course accepts his explanation that he was misunderstood, and everything that Riggs and Burges and the red-headed boy say will not move him an iota. Fortunately for Stirling, the Corps is divided on the question or he'd be cut, too, for standing by a man who had shown himself unworthy of a place in our ranks. But there's Mr. Riggs crossing the area now. Let's call him in and ask for his version of the affair."

A moment later Riggs stood before the two upper classmen, and on being asked by Faulkner if he had been within hearing distance on the night in question, he answered promptly:

" I was, sir."

" And you think you heard exactly what passed between the sentinel and me? "

" I did, sir."

Faulkner threw a triumphant glance in Graham's direction.

" Well, Mr. Riggs, I shall not expect you to

remember exactly what was said, I mean not word for word, but can you give me some idea of the sentinel's language? "

Riggs drew his comical face into a semblance of gravity.

" I should say, sir," he began, " that Mr. Winthrop's conversation consisted for the most part of painful prognostications wherein subterranean igneous agency played a principal part."

The upper classmen bit their lips to keep from laughing outright, but Riggs's " B. J. ity " had always been of such an amusing character that he was seldom punished for it, and now that the plebes were in barracks they were treated more as equals anyway, so all Faulkner said was:

" In other words, Mr. Riggs, you mean to say that Mr. Winthrop swore at me on post? "

" I distinctly heard him consign you, sir, to a warmer climate even than this was at the time, designating the exact locality in the plainest possible terms."

" And what makes you sure it was Mr. Winthrop who was using profanity, and not the upper classman? " put in Graham quietly.

" Because, sir, I recognized Mr. Winthrop's

voice. He had a cold in his head at the time, and I could not have been mistaken in it."

Mr. Faulkner looked very grave.

"Have you presented this version of the affair to your class, Mr. Riggs?" he inquired.

"I have, sir," answered Riggs respectfully, "but only Mr. Burges and Sorrel-Top — I beg your pardon, sir, Mr. Grosvenor Gronna of Moscow, Idaho — side with me, and they overheard the conversation just as I did. It happened that we were all awake for a half hour or more because of the racket on Mr. Winthrop's post, what with the 'Grand Rounds,' and a troop of cavalry on broom sticks, and one of the day boats, and a party of hostile Sioux all waiting to be challenged at the same time."

"Yes, yes, interrupted Faulkner tersely, "but you're sure you made the class understand that you heard Mr. Winthrop use profanity when acting as a sentinel on post?"

"Yes, sir, but you see, sir, Mr. Stirling is standing by his room-mate."

"So I heard," replied Faulkner, "and Mr. Stirling has a tremendous influence over the class, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, he's one of the finest fellows in it,

and nothing will persuade him that his room-mate made a false official statement or lied under oath. He says Winthrop — *Mr.* Winthrop, sir, — is as honest as the day is long, which may be so on the shortest day of the year, sir."

"Then you are perfectly convinced that Mr. Winthrop did not act as a cadet and gentleman either in his explanation to the Superintendent, or in the court-martial that followed the explanation?"

"I think Mr. Winthrop lied deliberately and with intention to deceive," returned Riggs with tautological earnestness.

Mr. Faulkner exchanged glances with Mr. Graham of the third class. Then he turned to the plebe.

"Of course you understand, Mr. Riggs, that feeling as you do in this matter you ought not to associate with Mr. Winthrop?"

Riggs' eyes blazed.

"Associate with him!" he echoed. "Why, I wouldn't even fight him, sir, when he challenged me the other day. He's beneath contempt, and I'm sure it's only a matter of time before his inability to tell the truth will get him into trouble again."

"Well, next time," interposed Faulkner, "the Corps won't wait to have him court-martialled. It will drum him out!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

Once established in barracks, the plebes were allowed for the first time in nearly three long months to carry their hands naturally and discontinue the exaggerated brace which had been their portion for the summer. In addition to this privilege, they were allowed from then on to lean back in their chairs in the Mess Hall, nor were they longer compelled to keep their eyes constantly on their plates while eating.

As about twenty-five candidates entered in September that year, the cadet officers found another awkward squad on their hands, and also had to report many plebes for hazing their new classmates, a " Sep " being a great temptation to a plebe, whose favourite amusement on Saturday night was to make the newcomers swim in the alcoves, stand up in a row on the mantel, and declaim, sing, or generally act the monkey.

Before the battalion had been away from camp a week, eight plebes were in arrest for hazing

" Seps," but as the hazing was light they were let off with extra tours on the area, and every Saturday afternoon in full military feather they marched back and forth, in company with other miscreants to the unsung music of:

" My country, 'tis for thee
I tread the are'-e-e!"

As one might have surmised, the president of the Anti-Hazing Society was one of the first men caught " deviling " new cadets, while most of the fourth class proved very skilful in turning their own experiences to account, for the yearlings never bothered the " Seps," that being left for the men who entered in June; and as the class settled down to good, hard studying, even that slight hazing ceased, though in the drills the awkwardness of the newcomers furnished no end of amusement to the veterans of three months' standing.

In addition to their military carriage, rugged health, and efficiency in the manual of arms, the men entering in June had learned to obey promptly and without question. They knew well the necessity of bridling the tongue that would outstrip the judgment, and holding in check the sophomoric repartee to a sharply spoken order. In other words, complete subordination

was theirs, that A B C of a soldier's education as taught in the primary course of plebe camp, and not a man among them but was better set-up morally and physically than when he came to West Point.

Also about that time the plebe class had imbibed enough West Point jargon to make their letters home almost unintelligible, Gronna one day rushing in on a group of cronies to read aloud a short note from his very dignified father. It began with a curt:

"Will you kindly translate the enclosed remarks from your last letter home? As nobody here is conversant with the dead language evidently taught at the Military Academy, we are unable to ascertain what you are talking about. For example, at the bottom of the second page you say 'I fessed cold in Math last week but maxed it clean in English.' Then farther on, you again lapse into the unknown tongue with the following:

"'I'm sure you'll be glad to know that I rag regardless at drill now, and might bone chevrons for yearling camp if I hadn't been hived by the tac of our div on Saturday night, running it after

taps which, of course, puts me on the area for extras, and I must bone demerits to keep from being found. But even if I succeeded in getting chevrons I'd probably be busted at the first formation, so I'll try to content myself with the rear rank, and let some other fellow do the bracing.'

"'That you begin this rather alarming statement by remarking you are sure I shall be glad to hear whatever follows is somewhat reassuring, but at your earliest convenience I should be very glad, and I must admit, somewhat relieved, to know what it is all about."

And nearly every plebe present had to acknowledge a similar letter to his own account from home people, not proficient in the parlance of the Point.

By the first of October, in place of battalion drill, artillery drills commenced, and the familiar commands of "Action rear" and "By the numbers, load" were their portion every afternoon, the fourth class going to Artillery Park, the yearlings tearing up and down the cavalry plain at light battery drill, and the second class firing the heavy coast cannon, members of the first class

commanding at all these drills, in addition to their work in pontoon bridge building.

Often when the artillery was in full blast one could realize pretty well what war sounds and looks like, the thunder of the heavy coast guns, the rapid discharge of cannon at light battery drill, the rush of horses and the sound of the bugle, all conspiring to an effect very martial in character, this being heightened by the flags of the signal corps waving from one mountain top to another.

As the weather became disagreeable the numerous military exercises dwindled to one artillery drill a day and two parades a week, while on the fifteenth of November the drills stopped until the following March, the parades continuing until the first snow of the season, which that year held off an unconscionable time, to the huge disgust of the battalion.

Meanwhile the academic work went on unrelentingly, the idea of competition being carried out to the fullest extent by arranging cadets in sections, according to their merit. Starting out in alphabetical order, the class found itself on the first Saturday's transfer very much mixed, some of the A's and B's tumbling from the first section to the " Immortals," either to fail unconditionally

at the approaching January examination, or else, week by week, to work themselves up again to at least a safe place in class standing; while several men, alphabetically at the foot of the class, speedily found themselves in the first section and stayed there throughout the year.

Although the studies were seemingly few for the plebes, as until January they had only Algebra and Rhetoric with weekly lectures on Ethics, still the lessons were very long, and when a man went to the board he not only recited but discussed the topic given, in all its bearings and relations. Nor were the sections so large but that every man had a chance to recite every day, most of the instructors being abnormally thorough in their methods.

"Specking" a lesson, or committing it to memory word for word, was never encouraged at West Point, and one of the first section men who had been brought up under that obsolete method was laughingly referred to by the rest of the class as "a comma finder." Indeed, many were taught for the first time in their lives how to study, and several ambitious fellows, who had always ranked one or two in other schools or colleges, felt well content did they attain but a medium

standing at West Point, considering the number of bright, hard working classmates in the lower sections.

Also they soon realized that of the hundred young men in the fight for class standing less than sixty would graduate, as a possible two-thirds were apt to be dropped from the lower end of the class at the many examinations between plebe September and the June of graduation. A few weeks' bad work, an unlucky slip of memory, or several days in the hospital insuring failure for a bright man, the chance of a dullard getting through, even under happier auspices, being very small indeed.

Unlike most other schools and colleges there was no snivelling excuse accepted at West Point for a badly prepared lesson on the score of illness, or lack of time for study, or failure to take down the lesson correctly. Either a man made a good recitation or a poor one, and he was marked accordingly. Every Saturday afternoon these marks were posted in the hall of the Headquarters Building that the cadets might note their relative standing, or in the event of any one receiving a mark which he considered unfair, it gave him the right of appeal to a higher authority than the

instructor, this in turn making the instructor most vigilant in his record of the week's work.

Although "Vegetation was got off the dryest twigs of boys under the frostiest circumstances," West Point never produced "mental green peas — at Christmas and intellectual asparagus all the year round." Neither were "mathematical gooseberries — common at untimely seasons," for boys brought up under the Dr. Blimmer-Grandgrind-M'Choakumchild system soon found the lessons at the Military Academy too long and too difficult to be crammed by rote, and if they had any brains left after that parrot-like process of assimilating knowledge, happily more common in that day than this, they learned within a few weeks to recite their lessons not in the author's words, but in their own.

"Very good, sir," an instructor would say after a cadet had laboriously read down a page with his mental eye, "a rather remarkable feat of memory, sir, but at West Point we care very little for what the author thinks on a given subject. We want to know what *you* think, and in your own words, sir!"

Whereupon a plebe, brought up under the old method, would have to admit that he hadn't

thought anything at all on the subject, and would accordingly be marked very low, despite the fact that he had recited a page or more almost verbatim.

In the mathematical department the plebe was even harder pressed with original problems, some of these having nothing whatever to do with the lesson of the day, and perhaps dating back a week or more to some principle already forgotten by the Dr. Blimmer graduate.

To be sure, on its military side West Point made a chap "bear to pattern somehow or other," and at drills and parade the cadets looked as if they "had been lately turned at the same time in the same factory, on the same principle, like so many piano legs." But mentally, at least, they worked from within outward there, attempting no surface polish before the planing had been accomplished, while the idea of community was so bred in the bone that there was little or nothing heard in the Corps of seclusion and exclusion.

In those old days it must be confessed that the close application to x y and z monopolized any latent literary talent at the institution, while foot-ball was an unknown quantity, and base-

ball played so seldom that the average score might be summed up briefly as a broken nose on one side to a dislocated thumb on the other. Even the Dialectic Society, given a fresh lease of life by every yearling class, soon fell a victim to its members' lack of time, and went from bad to worse until restored to a semblance of health by the succeeding class.

Aside from drills and parades, the only approach to athletics was the gymnastic work under Old Grizzly, this being little more than the setting up exercises described in the School for the Soldier; while on alternate days the fourth classmen were instructed in fencing by an elderly Spaniard, this gentleman bearing the reputation of having been a duel fighter in his youth, which of course endeared him to the heart of every plebe, and made it a great honour to cross swords with so distinguished an adversary.

With the exception of a few hours' release from quarters on Saturday afternoon, there was not a moment throughout the week that an ambitious man could call his own, the brief respite after breakfast, dinner, and supper each day being devoted to one's books, except in the case of a bright fellow like Riggs, whose only ambition was

to graduate, not to stand high, and who studied just well enough to keep from being found deficient.

Some of the " digs," like Raymond and Bayard and Burges of Maine, even " cut " their Saturday afternoon privileges to study; though as a rule most of the fourth class, in little groups of two and three and four, made a dash for Flirtation Walk or Trophy Point on being dismissed from ranks after their midday dinner, while the remainder of the class spent the time in walking extra tours on the area, their offences ranging from " unauthorized light in quarters and bedding over window for improper purposes after Taps " to the more serious indiscretion of having been " hived " while hazing new cadets or making unauthorized visits after " Call to quarters."

Often, too, the Saturday privileges would be curtailed by the appearance on the post of some distinguished visitor or other, the thunder of salutes causing the cadets to grumble not a little, for it always meant a review, which in addition to their other work was an exhausting thing, the men not only having to stand a long time in ranks, but obliged as well to march and double time for the distinguished guest, who, unless he

happened to be a West Pointer himself, little dreamed how unwelcome he was.

Up to January the history of one academic week was just like that of the week preceding it, a round of hard study, some heart-burnings over low grades, and on Saturday afternoon a few hours' recreation, if one's standing in discipline allowed and he felt he could spare the time from his studies. It was a humdrum life, at the best, and as the hills around the post lost their gay colours and the wintry days set in with nothing to break their monotony, the hard mental work was a blessing in disguise, though to most plebes those first four months in barracks might have been as many years.

As for Christmas, it came so near the dreaded January examinations that every one was anxious over the approaching struggle, and in the fourth class, especially, resignations came thick and fast, those who were afraid of failing taking this method of escape.

In reviewing preparatory to examination, men like Stirling and Raymond made some of their best grades, and right at the time when good grades counted most, for while they were somewhat slow in picking up a subject, they were

equally slow in forgetting it. Notwithstanding which, Raymond, who was inclined to borrow trouble at a usurious rate of interest, worried night and day, not so much for fear of being found deficient at the January examinations, as because he was sure his nervousness and excitability would prevent his making a good recitation before the Academic Board.

The last thing Raymond thought of, as he drifted to sleep that stormy Christmas Eve, was the impending ordeal, and even the delight of waking up next morning to find the hated parade ground covered with snow was not enough to dispel his fears. On the return from chapel he was told that a box from home awaited him in the Treasurer's office. This made him forget his blues somewhat, until reminded by his room-mate Lampton that according to regulations he could not have the box in barracks.

"Why don't you tackle the Ogre about it?" suggested the resourceful Riggs, referring to the quartermaster, who was dubbed the Ogre by reason of a hard-featured face and black scowling brows, combined with a manner as ugly as his looks.

Lampton laughed disagreeably.

"Fancy Mizzoo in the role of giant killer," he mocked.

Raymond, who up to that moment would almost as soon have faced the Academic Board as Major Cramer, got to his feet with alacrity.

"What military bean stalk shall I climb to reach the Ogre?" he asked, ignoring Lampton except in so far as his allusion to the bean stalk went.

Riggs explained, and a few minutes later Mizzoo was in the awful Presence and would not have been surprised to find the official walls decorated with raw heads and bloody bones, while if the Ogre had started in by saying "Fee faw fi fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman," it could not have been a bit worse than the way he snapped Raymond up about the size of the box from home.

"Christmas box!" he snarled, "Christmas box! Why, it's big enough for officers' quarters, Mr. — er — what did you say your name was?" and he scowled fiercely at the wall behind Mizzoo.

The boy answered the question quietly enough, though he resented the major's peremptory manner.

"Raymond, eh?" grunted the officer. "What's

that? From Missouri? One of the Boone County Raymonds? You don't say so?" Then he turned his eyes on Mizzoo for the first time, and looked him over from head to foot in a way that would have embarrassed any one not hardened by a course of plebe camp. At last, more gruffly than ever, he blurted out:

"Was your mother a Miss Breckenridge of Kentucky? Sara Breckenridge?"

Raymond nodded, so bewildered as to forget his military manners, but the quartermaster, his eyes still on Raymond's face, seemed to forget them too, for he went on shortly:

"You're very like your mother as I last saw her, Mr. Raymond, very like indeed!" and in answer to the question in Raymond's eyes: "I knew her when the family moved out to Missouri in the fifties. She — your mother, I mean — married soon after and I — well, I went away about that time and have never been back since."

Raymond looked his surprise, but the major was staring out of the window unseeingly, the ugly frown between his eyes intensified, the deep lines from nose to chin seeming to hold his well shaped mouth in a parenthesis. Suddenly he threw back his shaggy head.

"HE TURNED HIS EYES ON MIZZOO FOR THE FIRST TIME."

"About that Christmas box," he began abruptly, "I suppose I'll have to let you have it in barracks, seeing that it arrived on Christmas morning, and that as a fourth classman you didn't know any better than to let them send it. But remember, it would be allowed at no other time; and, moreover, if you live through eating all the trash that's in there, and happen not to be found deficient before another Christmas, please let your family know that we're not running a young ladies' seminary at the Point, and that we don't approve of caramels and pickles in barracks."

Mizzoo winced at the unexpected sarcasm, and bit his lip to keep back the retort trembling there. The major noticed his expression, and smiled not unkindly. Then, as if from a sudden impulse, he got to his feet:

"A merry Christmas to you, boy," he mumbled awkwardly. "I know so far it's been a lonely one, for a plebe at West Point isn't apt to hear even an echo of the herald angels' song. In fact, I don't think you'll find Christmas very enlivening during any of your four holidays here. I didn't, and my people were much like your own, I reckon — southern extraction, small village, big family connection, and the rest of it! Home ties are pretty

strong with that sort, and — and I almost died of loneliness my first year at the Academy."

Raymond swallowed hard, but before he could make an appropriate rejoinder the major had pushed back his chair, and in his old rough manner was issuing instructions about the red tape to be gone through with to get the box into barracks, and finally, in the same gruff way, he held out his hand to the boy.

" Although I'm an old bachelor with no young people in the house," he said, " I'd be pleased to have you take tea with me the first Saturday evening after examinations. That is, if it wouldn't bore you to come and cheer up a lonely old man. What's that? You'd be glad to come? Well — well, I'd be glad to have you, boy," and Raymond found himself outside the Headquarters Building, his hand still tingling from the major's hearty grasp.

For a moment he stood there, dazed, bewildered. Was it possible the dreaded Ogre of the Corps was but a lonely old man, after all, and one, moreover, who had known his mother in her girlhood? Was it really true the Ogre had invited him to tea? Raymond kindled at the thought of having a friend on the post, even distantly acquainted

with his family, but felt a sudden contraction of his throat as he remembered the major's face staring unseeingly out of the window. He hadn't looked like an Ogre then.

Walking slowly across the area, his thoughts still with the major, Raymond was startled by a hearty clap on the back.

"Hello, Mizzoo," came Stirling's cheery voice. "Wouldn't the Ogre let you have the grub? No wonder you look cast down. What's that? You can have it? Want some one to give you a lift on the box? Well, here's some one, old fellow. Just wait a jiffy till I get a permit from the officer in charge and we'll have it in barracks quicker than a wink."

Returning with their prize from the Treasurer's office to the fourth floor of the eighth division, the boys were greeted with uproarious delight.

"How did you get a permit to have it in quarters?" they all clamoured excitedly. "How did you work the Ogre, Mizzoo?"

From Raymond's facetious account of the interview, one would have inferred that Major Cramer had been worsted in an argument that resulted in his thanking Mizzoo for the opportunity of serving him even in so small a matter,

and telling him that in the future he must call on his department for anything that would add to the happiness and welfare of the Corps.

" Mizzoo's improving," laughed Riggs in Jack's ear.

" Mizzoo's all right! " answered Jack aloud, and Raymond, overhearing him, tried not to show how pleased he was at the army boy's commendation.

As the officer in charge had stipulated that no provisions of any kind would be allowed in quarters next day, Raymond issued invitations for a feast to take place that evening after " Taps." So when all lights were supposed to be out, and every one was presumably in bed, the twelve plebes of that division assembled in Raymond's room, and with windows darkened by army blankets pinned over them, they proceeded to enjoy the flesh-pots of Missouri, though after their elaborate Christmas dinner in the Mess Hall it is a wonder they could have eaten another mouthful.

About midnight, Mizzoo, being full of cake and gratitude, proposed a toast to the absent ones, and as the feast was strictly temperate in character they ate to the health of the senders, and wished the old Ogre every joy for allowing them to have the box in barracks.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The first week in January was an eventful one for the plebe class, those in the lower sections feeling pretty blue with the prospect of failure ahead of them, while those in the upper sections were sick with anxiety for some friend whose fate hung in the balance. To every one's surprise, poor Schuyler Van Norsdell was one of the eighteen who failed to pass, and no one was more surprised than Schuyler himself, sure as he was of his own ability, and gaily confident that the authorities would never think of "finding" a man in the fourth section. Hard working Burges of Maine also failed, as did little Sampson of Tennessee, who had developed more in proportion during his six months at the Academy then had any one else in the class, though his lack of early training made it impossible for him to keep up with the academic work.

For over a week those in doubt lived a miserable existence, but on January eleventh the

announcement was made, and the eighteen unfortunates, dressed in civilian clothes, were telling their classmates " good bye," some of them breaking down completely on seeing the ambition of years shattered. Within twenty-four hours work began again, and no one would have realized from the placid look of the water that so many men had gone under.

There were other surprises at that January examination, for young Winthrop, who had been making phenomenally low grades since September, " maxed it cold " on a very difficult subject in Algebra, while Stirling and Raymond gained several files on their previous standing, in the redivision of sections finding themselves in the fourth and fifth, respectively. Gronna, despite the fact that the course was a review for him, lost three sections in Mathematics and two in French; lazy brilliant Riggs held his own; and poor old Bayard, for all his hard work, went down to the " Immortals," standing ninety-nine in a class of a hundred and two.

The night the new books were drawn, Raymond piled them up in the centre of the table.

" Isn't it discouraging to think we'll have to go

through them all, not only once but several times before June? " he sighed.

Lampton upset the pile with a jerk of his elbow.

" The first lesson you should learn, Mizzoo, is cheerfulness," he declared, " and they ought to have a course on ' How to See Clearly ' as well as ' How to Write Clearly ' for such an old Jeremiah as you. Sufficient unto the day is the lesson thereof, my friend, and as this Plane Geometry is anything but plain to me I must beg to be excused from further conversation," and the boy buried his curly head in the book before him.

Raymond, stifling another sigh, picked up his French grammar, realizing with a dull presentiment what it was going to cost him in grades, for like several of the class he had never studied French before, and found the pronunciation a great stumbling block to his progress. Before he was a quarter through the lesson, his roommate had tossed both his Geometry and French aside and was deep in a novel he kept concealed with his tobacco up the chimney.

" Taps " came and still Raymond had not even opened his Geometry, so after inspection a blanket was hung over the window, and " lights were run " at the risk of demerits, while the boy

pored over his books, a wet towel around his head to keep him awake, for exhausted after the hard day's work he could scarcely hold his eyes open, especially with Lampton sleeping peacefully near at hand.

And that was but the beginning of a winter of incessant toil, day and night, even during release from quarters, his reward being a fair grade in Mathematics, an excellent one in English, and a transfer down in French week after week; while his room-mate, without the least effort, ranked the first section in everything.

On the other side of the hall, Jack Stirling struggled as hard with Mathematics as Raymond struggled with French, for the length of lessons and the number of problems given out each day would have made the average scholar throw down his books in despair. As a rule there would be from eighteen to twenty pages of solid "Math" to learn perfectly, and on top of that twenty-five problems, so that most of the class formed the habit of "running lights" and studying after "Taps," thus standing an excellent chance for confinements or demerits.

One Saturday evening on release from quarters, Jack knocked at Raymond's door and receiving

no reply, he pushed it open to discover Raymond lying half way across the table, his head buried in his arms, the picture of despair.

Shocked at discovering his neighbour in mental undress, as it were, for the Missourian was evidently indulging in a fit of the blues, Jack started to tiptoe away, and then, thinking better of it, he went boldly into the room, and with a hearty word of greeting put a hand on his friend's shoulder.

Still Raymond did not move, and of a sudden Stirling realized the boy had fainted. Quickly lowering him to the floor, he threw open the window and was about to call for help, when Raymond staggered to his feet, white and dazed.

"Reckon I must have fallen asleep," he stammered, but discovering that his face was wet with a generous sprinkling of water, he grinned a little sheepishly.

"Fainted, did I?" he asked. "Well, I'm glad it was you that found me, Jack, and not Lampton. He'd have blabbed about it. What's the matter? Oh, just worn out, I reckon, and a bit discouraged, too, for it's pretty hard after a week's struggle to be confronted by such awfully low marks."

Jack looked puzzled.

" I thought you were quite a ' fiend ' at ' Math,' Raymond, and as for French, with Lampton in the first section, and this year's course a review for him anyway, he ought to be able to help you through at little or no expense to himself."

Raymond flushed uneasily.

" I — I'm such a ' goat ' that I suppose Lampton doesn't want to be bothered," he stammered.

" But it's never a bother to help a classmate," blazed Jack, " and he's got time to burn, too. What does he do with it? "

" Burns it, I reckon," laughed Raymond unwillingly, pointing to a box of Egyptian cigarettes which the careless Lampton had failed to put away. " And then, too, he reads a lot, and — and sleeps some."

" Smokes — sleeps — reads, when his roommate needs help! " fumed Jack, and started to say something very uncomplimentary about the absent Lampton, but instead turned on Raymond almost fiercely.

" Mizzoo, you shocking old ' dig,' " he began, " why didn't you tell me how things were with you? Who gave you permission to fall off in weight and faint around barracks as if it were a girls' boarding school? Why, man alive, I could

have helped you, even I, who never expect to do much better than hold my own about the middle of the class. French happens to come easy to me, though, from speaking greaser Spanish when a boy in the West, and I'm going up in it every week, so if you'll let me give you a lift now and then and we'll see what we shall see."

Raymond flashed a grateful look into Jack's animated face.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake don't thank me, Mizzoo," he protested. "I've no doubt you'll have a chance to pay me back with interest when we get into 'Analyt' in April, for I'm awfully 'gross' in 'Math,' and only hold my own by 'boning' hard. But I make it a rule to sacrifice some study for exercise in the gym, or this close confinement would make me feel out of sorts."

"But I haven't time for exercise," pleaded Raymond. "Why, I even cut meals to study. Though, to tell the truth, I've so little appetite it's not much of a deprivation."

Jack examined his friend keenly and noticed with some little apprehension how thin and white he had grown. "Do you smoke?" he asked suddenly. "No? I thought not. Your only dissipation seems to be work, but you've got to

cut down on that as you would on any other excess, Raymond, or you'll never pull through the course. As your future coach, I recommend in the first place that you put away all your books to-night and come down with me to Riggs's room. They're having a jollification there, that will help clear your brain, and to-morrow you and I will tackle those *ungs* and *ongs* together, and I'm sure you'll win out in the section room on Monday!

Raymond looked positively frightened at the idea of wasting a whole evening, but Jack was firm.

"You can't run lights till morning, stay away from meals to study, never take advantage of Saturday release from quarters, and expect to be anything but dull in your studies, Mizzoo. As for losing a section or so in French, you might as well make up your mind to that first as last, for there are so many yet below you who have studied it before and must come up, that the inexperienced Frenchmen are bound to go down. But if you let me work with you an hour or so a day, I'll guarantee you'll never reach the 'Immortals.' Now I don't pretend to know anything at all about 'Math,' but I coached Winthrop so that —"

Jack stopped suddenly and turned very red.

"*You* coached Winthrop!" echoed Raymond incredulously. "Why, Sorrel-top Gronna said he did magnificently at the examination. In fact, he and some of the other men of the section seemed to think that Winthrop couldn't have made a recitation like that without having the principal formula to refer to. But I suppose it's simply a case of the old saying give a dog a bad name and you might as well hang him."

Jack was silent and Raymond, fearing he might have offended the man he cared for most at the Academy, went on more slowly:

"It almost looks, Jack, as if Riggs and Gronna and Burges had won the class over to their way of thinking about Winthrop's conduct on guard last summer. I notice several other fellows have stopped speaking to him within the last few days."

"Well, *I'm* speaking to him," answered Jack stoutly. "He told me on his word of honour that Faulkner was mistaken, besides swearing to it at the court-martial."

"But Riggs and Sorrel-top and Burges say they heard him," protested Raymond, who dearly loved an argument.

Jack looked fierce.

"I know those men who say it honestly think they heard him, but surely Winthrop ought to know himself what he said. And then, too, as you remember, he had an awful cold at the time and they might easily have been mistaken." There was an appealing note in Jack's voice, quite new to it, as he went on earnestly: "Don't you go back on us, Mizzoo. We both need your help."

Raymond thrust a hearty hand into Jack's.

"I'd stand by any one you defended, old man, and though I didn't like Winthrop a bit when he first came here, I'm beginning to think he's a pretty decent sort of chap."

"He's one of the finest men I ever knew," cried Jack, elated with Raymond's praise, "and next to you, Raymond, I like him better than any one in the Corps, not even excepting Riggs."

Raymond, who had not thought he stood so high in Stirling's estimation, gulped a little, and then, in praise of Winthrop, he said:

"Did you know that Tom's been helping Bayard in French since the first of the year?"

Jack's eyes softened wonderfully.

"No, Mizzoo, he hasn't said a word about it, though I could'nt help noticing he'd climbed down from his family tree since last summer, when he

was actually indignant that such men as Bayard should be admitted to the Academy."

Raymond laughed.

" Dear old Chevalier! You know the story of his first recitation in French, don't you? No? I thought it had gone the rounds before this. Well, it seems the poor duffer was in the hospital with that ulcerated tooth of his for several days, and when he came out his section had reached the conjugation of the verb *aimer*. Of course old Bayard had been studying every available minute at the hospital, so when he was sent to the front board to write down the imperfect subjunctive of the verb ' That I might be loved,' he put it down in his big school-boy hand quite correctly, '*Que je fusse aimé — que tu fusses aimé — qu' il*, or, *elle fut aimé*,' and so forth.

" The instructor — it was Lucifer, Son of the morning, as I remember — looked gratified, and asked Bayard to read it off to the class. So Bayard, without the slightest hesitation, took down the pointer and began, ' Quee gee fussy amy — quee two fusses amy — quill or elly futt amy,' and was very much offended when Lucifer stopped him on the plural of the verb with a choking plea to remember his pronunciation; for

according to Gronna, who was in the same section, you know, Bayard said he had pronounced it just as it was written and didn't see how it could properly be pronounced any other way."

"That's on a par with little Sampson's example of the sublime in Rhetoric," laughed Jack. "Don't you remember the time he attempted to quote Cæsar's noble speech to the pilot who was afraid to put to sea in a storm, 'Why do you fear? You carry Cæsar!'"

"Oh, yes," chuckled Raymond, "and poor little Sampson, striking an attitude and in a voice trembling with emotion, solemnly declaimed: 'What you 'fraid of anyhow? Ain't you got Cæsar along!'"

"And that time he affirmed that Demosthenes was the greatest living orator?" put in Jack with an explosion of mirth.

"And that other time he told the 'Math' instructor that a straight line was a line that wasn't crooked," added Raymond.

Jack doubled up at the remembrance and then went on more seriously:

"But what a brick the little chap turned out to be, Mizzoo, and how splendidly he came through plebe camp, for all his protests about acting as

a 'body servant' to the upper classmen. If his early education hadn't been so hopelessly neglected, he'd have been one of the finest fellows in the Corps at graduation."

"Well, he said he'd rather have come to West Point and failed at the January examinations than never have come at all," declared Raymond.

"That was a manly thing to say," approved Stirling, "and only goes to show what the Academy did for him."

A moment later the two friends, arm in arm, appeared at Riggs's door. The host of the evening threw down the guitar on which he was accompanying his guests in a melodious "Benny Havens, Oh!" and with a rapturous gleam of teeth and eyes welcomed the newcomers.

"So you've decided at last to give that heterogeneous ganglionic aggregation you are pleased to call your brain a rest, eh?" he flung good naturedly in Raymond's direction, and to his room-mate, "Here, Sorrel-top, bring forth the boodle. Our guests would fain refresh themselves."

Gronna, who was not a bit more red-headed than Riggs himself, obediently handed over a pitcher of lemonade, this being rather weak by reason of some water surreptitiously added to it

on the arrival of the late guests, while Riggs passed them two generous slices of dried apple pie and a box marked " Fine Bonbons " which was empty, except for those sticky green and pink candies which are always left till the last.

Then came more songs, and " grinds," and general foolishness, till the drums and fifes sounding " Tattoo " sent them scampering up and down the iron stairs, the only reminder of the feast being some grease spots on the floor for which Riggs, as room orderly, would be held responsible at Sunday morning inspection.

Half way up to the " cock-loft," as the fourth floor in barracks used to be called, Stirling and Raymond ran full tilt into Bayard coming down.

" Why didn't you come to Riggs' room to-night? " asked Jack in passing.

" I — I had another engagement," explained Bayard lamely.

Jack stopped short.

" Were you with Winthrop? " he insisted.

Bayard, blushing furiously, nodded.

" Was he coaching you in French? " asked Jack.

" He told me not to tell you," mumbled Bayard.

"Why not?" demanded Jack.

Bayard hesitated.

"Well, he said something or other about never having done anything decent in his life unless he went about it with a brass band, and that this time he'd 'do good by stealth.'"

"'And blush to find it fame,'" put in Raymond.

Jack flashed him a grateful look, said good night to Bayard and walked down the hall to his own room where Winthrop was already preparing for bed.

"I've discovered all, Mr. Winthrop," Jack began dramatically as he opened the door. "You can deceive me no longer, sir!"

Winthrop went suddenly very white and staggered into a near-by chair.

Jack frowned heavily.

"I thought you had some writing to do this evening when you made me go down to Riggs' jollification," he accused his room-mate, "and instead of that you staid up here to coach Bayard."

Winthrop moistened his dry lips and, after a scarcely perceptible hesitation, spoke:

"I did have some letters to write," he began.

"They are stamped and sealed on the table there." Then he broke down completely: "Oh, Jack, you startled me so. I thought for a moment you, too, had gone back on me. Every day more fellows fail to speak, and it seems at times as if I couldn't bear it."

Jack, all contrition, was at his side in an instant.

"You know I won't go back on you, Winthrop," he cried, "that I haven't doubted you for even a moment from the very first. Why, you couldn't do anything to make me doubt you —"

But here he stopped, a slow colour flooding his face, for once since that unfortunate occurrence in camp Jack Stirling had doubted his room-mate, and the shame of it made his manner toward Winthrop more considerate than usual. And long after Winthrop was asleep, Jack lay there, his cheeks burning in the darkness at his own disloyalty towards a friend who trusted him as implicitly as did Tom Winthrop, and who was so in need of unquestioning good fellowship.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

This disloyalty on the part of Jack Stirling dated back to the January examinations when, poor mathematician that he was, the army boy had come to a sudden standstill on a problem he was trying to work out for the edification of the Academic Board.

In an abstracted way he noticed that Winthrop, who happened to be his neighbour, was at a standstill, too, and glancing idly at Winthrop's work, Jack saw at once that while substituting in an important formula, Winthrop had changed its value, a point Jack had dwelt on so much in reviewing with his room-mate that he was surprised the boy should have forgotten it. But now he had his own scalp to think of, so, closing his eyes to insure better concentration of thought, he turned his head even more in Winthrop's direction, and stood there waiting for the inspiration that should solve his problem.

A second he waited, two seconds, perhaps,

when suddenly it came, and opening his eyes he turned to the board, but not before he had seen Winthrop, with a guilty start, push his cuff up his sleeve.

Mechanically Stirling rubbed out the beginning of his work, and as mechanically put down his new conception of it. Then he stood there, wondering what he ought to do.

If Winthrop were cheating at examination, he ought to be exposed; but on the other hand how did Jack know he was cheating? Because a man happens to push up his cuff, need it necessarily have something written on it? Because Winthrop happened to rub out his previous work and start in again, this time making the chalk fly, would it insure his guilt? Was it not possible that Jack, in common with the rest of the class, was unduly suspicious of Winthrop since the court-martial? If Raymond or Riggs or Bayard had done the same thing, would he have jumped to the immediate conclusion that they were cheating?

Faster and faster flew Winthrop's chalk, until at last it broke off and he had to take a fresh piece, Jack meanwhile standing there doing nothing with his own work, but sick at heart by reason of the miserable suspicions sweeping over him.

If Winthrop were guilty of cheating at examinations, he was also guilty of having sworn at the officer of the day his last night on guard; and if he had sworn at the officer of the day then Jack Stirling was at fault for shielding a man who should have been dismissed from the Academy.

Again and again he put these hateful thoughts away from him as unworthy. Yet again and again that wave of suspicion swept over his head, leaving him breathless, gasping, weak. At last he quieted his clamouring conscience by a compromise. He would not expose Winthrop before the Academic Board. He would wait until their return to barracks, and if an examination of the cuff proved Jack right, he would make Winthrop resign by a threat of reporting him to the authorities.

Quieted somewhat by this resolve, Stirling finished his problem, scanned it carefully, drew on his white gloves and, pointer in hand, faced about to recite. But he was so wandering in his manner and so absent-minded in his replies to the Academic Board that the professor of Mathematics reprimanded him sharply for inattention, a circumstance that would have caused Jack untold mortification at any other time.

Now he went through it all as in a dream, and after being excused by the Board, dragged himself wearily up to his room, and sat down in the chair by the window, his head in his hands, his eyes closed.

Presently he heard Winthrop bound up the steps three at a time. A vague hope stirred Jack's breast, and he felt his breath come hard as he braced himself for whatever was to happen.

"Jack — Jack —" called Winthrop gaily even before the door was closed, "oh, Jack, old man, I made a bully recitation. Thanks to you, I 'maxed it clean,' Jack, 'maxed it clean.' I can never thank you enough, never!" and Winthrop smiled down on his room-mate, such joy and gratitude in his usually sombre face that Jack was at once disarmed, and felt the question he had been about to ask was as ungenerous as it was unjust. If Winthrop's light-heartedness had not of itself restored Jack's faith, his avowal that he owed his good recitation to his room-mate's coaching would have quieted suspicion, and Jack felt a little shudder of self-abhorrence as he realized how near he had come to wounding this man to the death.

"The professor complimented me," Winthrop

went on happily. "And I — oh, Jack, I did so want to tell him that I owed it all to you. I longed to speak right out and say what you had done for me, not only in this matter but in the other," and the brown eyes looking into Jack's penitent blue ones clouded over suddenly with wordless gratitude, though a moment later he gave Stirling a good-natured punch in the ribs to cover up his embarassment at having been a "softy."

With a queer little laugh, Jack got to his feet, and threw an arm around Winthrop's shoulder. It was the first time he had ever been the least demonstrative with his room-mate, and Winthrop accepted it gladly, little realizing that Jack's sudden friendship was born of remorse, for though Stirling had defended his room-mate against the whole Corps he had never really liked him until that moment.

Standing there by the window, arm in arm, and looking out over the parade ground white with snow, each boy determined in his own way to prove himself worthy of the comradeship that had broken through the crust of their former reserve like a daring young crocus braving the winter's snow.

Honest as he was in everything, Stirling determined then and there to make a clean breast of his unworthy suspicions, but when he tried to do so he saw that the friendship between himself and Winthrop was too young for such an unpleasant revelation. So with a certain self-loathing at his own deception he gave himself up to the joy of the moment.

But days merged into weeks, and weeks into months, and still Jack had not spoken, partly because he dreaded wounding his friend, made over-sensitive by the fact that one by one the class had " cut " him, showing plainly by their manner that he was not a welcome addition to any of their plebe gatherings on Saturday night; and partly because he could not bear to stand a self-confessed traitor in Winthrop's eyes.

Out of all the class, Raymond and Bayard were the only ones who ever came in a friendly way to that tabooed room in the cock-loft, unless it were known that Winthrop was absent when they flocked there by the dozen, for in spite of Stirling's friendship for Winthrop, he was the most popular man in the class.

Notwithstanding this ostracism, or perhaps because of it, Winthrop did well in his studies that

winter. Also his name appeared less frequently on the delinquency list, and he repaid the friendship shown him by Stirling, Raymond, and Bayard, with a single-hearted devotion of which no one had thought him capable. To be sure, he still gave way to fits of sullenness, sometimes becoming so moody, low-spirited, and discouraged that even Jack despaired of him; though when he emerged from his slough of despond to coach poor old Bayard in French or shoulder some of Raymond's difficulties in the same course, he found, as many people have found before him, that in helping others he had also helped himself, and while it did not bring happiness it at least insured peace.

Having spoken French since childhood, Winthrop easily went to the first section in that course, and finally worked himself up to Raymond's section in Mathematics. His first day there, the instructor, who was slightly deaf, had Winthrop up on questions and showed by his final "That will do, Mr. Winthrop," that he considered the boy had answered his last question correctly. This happened to be something Winthrop had not mastered in the lesson, but out of the whole section it is probable that Raymond was the only one who

noticed the error, the other men being up to their ears in difficult problems. Without a moment's hesitation Winthrop explained the situation, and had the poor satisfaction of seeing the instructor scratch out a good mark in his section book, the bulletin board on the following Saturday showing that his honesty had cost him at least five-tenths, as up to that point he had clearly "maxed" the subject.

On Raymond telling Jack of the circumstance, for it never occurred to Winthrop to mention it, Jack hovered on the brink of confession for several days, but failed to take the plunge, realizing to his own shame that he had reached a point where he was not so much afraid of hurting Winthrop as of hurting himself in Winthrop's estimation.

Meanwhile the year was marching on towards June, the first milestone after the January examinations being the new dress coats issued the plebes; and very particular were those well set-up, soldierly young gentlemen as to the proper cut of shoulder and waist. Nor were they at all deceived by the old tailor's inevitable "It's a noble fit, sir, a *noble* fit," insisting rather that the fit be made nobler by letting it out at the shoulder and

taking it in at the waist, while the bell buttons had to be sewed on at an angle that accentuated the tapering outline and gave each man the much desired cadet figure that but a year before had been his envy and despair.

The misery of trying on a pair of tight new boots is not a circumstance to the agony endured in the first wearing of a coat that makes a rather solidly built young man look wasp-waisted, and it often took two classmates to get the garment buttoned around a fellow at the first venture, while it was not uncommon for the cadets to wear each other's coats to help break them in.

Jack Stirling and Tom Winthrop were perhaps the best looking of the class in their new outfits, though Raymond came in as an easy third, his breadth of shoulder and slenderness of waist showing off to advantage in a coat that Bayard had worn for a week before Raymond could so much as button it around him.

The next event of importance was when the class marched down in sections to the Administration Building and took the final oath of office as cadets before receiving their warrant of appointment. This made them no longer conditional cadets, but, according to a decision of the Supreme

Court, officers of the service, with the thrilling possibility of being called out in case of necessity.

When a Notary Public read the oath aloud to the class, the cadets standing erect with the right hand raised, there was not a man among them but felt his heart beat faster as he solemnly swore to support the Constitution of the United States; to bear true allegiance to the national government; to maintain and defend the sovereignty of his country paramount to any and all allegiance, sovereignty, or fealty that he might owe to any state or country whatsoever; and that he would at all times obey the legal orders of his superior officers, and the rules and articles governing the Armies of the United States.

An on-looker might have wondered why the authorities did not make more of a ceremony in administering the oath of office, for it is such a stirring thing to be sworn in to serve your country that it seems as if it should be signalized by some great military demonstration. Yet when each man raised a hand in response to his own name, no roar of cannon, no rattle of fife and drum, no waving of flags, nor stirring music from the band were necessary to give him a full realization of what it all meant.

Following close on the heels of the delivery of the warrants, came Washington's birthday. This was celebrated only by the firing of a salute, which to men engrossed in study produced as much patriotic feeling as the slamming of a door; but as the Hundredth Night Entertainment came a day or so later, it might have been said to celebrate that great American's birthday as well as the glorious fact that there were but a hundred days to June.

June, when the graduate would don his shoulder straps; when the second classman would rise to the height of his cadet glory and become a first classman, falling heir to the chevrons of those splendid fellows who had gone before; when the third class of the previous summer would go on furlough; while, the plebes whom they had disciplined so well, would fill their place with all the joys of yearling camp ahead of them.

As every cadet in every class could gladly celebrate the hundred days to June, even confinements were suspended for that one evening and in the original songs, addresses, and readings that were given in the old Mess Hall, the cadets lost no opportunity to fire off some well aimed jokes at the academic and tactical targets. As a rule

those ponderous gentlemen never knew they had been hit, the Corps alone realizing that the shot was planted in the bull's-eye every time; while the printed " Howitzer " might have been written in Greek for all it meant to the uninitiated, notwithstanding which many a serious-minded plebe sent it home with copious foot notes that the family might appreciate the humour so patent to him and to his classmates.

Next morning, punctual to his annual appointment, the sun peeped over the eastern hills just as the Corps came out of the Mess Hall, and as usual it was greeted joyously and noisily by all alike, especially the yearlings and first classmen who saw furlough and graduation in its beams.

By the middle of March, drills, parades, and full dress guard-mountings were again in vogue on the cavalry plain, the parade ground being too soft as yet for any heavy marching, and as the drills lasted an hour and a quarter, which meant handling a ten pound rifle that length of time, with but a few moments " place rest," the fourth classmen were vividly reminded of the old squad drill, especially when they moved their sore muscles or looked at each other's bruised shoulders.

Although there were no visitors on the post, the

officers and their families assembled every evening to watch parade, while at any hour of the day the children of the garrison might be seen going through the evolutions of company drill — right wheel, left wheel, right dress, left dress, carry arms, and all the rest of it — with much more facility than many a plebe shows after weeks of training.

On the fifteenth of April, artillery drills began, and at the same hour every day the siege, the mortar, the sea-coast, and the light batteries all boomed together.

In May came battalion drills, and the plebes "boning chevrons" prayed for rain, as the cadet officers reported everybody for the slightest irregularity or mistake in ranks, thus building up the demerit list very rapidly. Also they were each given a chance in the front rank, a most difficult experience for a novice, as in the rear rank all one has to do is to follow a front rank file, while in the front rank one has to do all the thinking and acting for himself, a most hazardous undertaking for a person inexperienced in the manual.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

At the election of class officers earlier in the year, Stirling had been unanimously voted for as president, while Raymond and Riggs were appointed secretary and vice-president, respectively, Riggs, in addition, being made one of the six hop managers for the coming summer.

This was considered a great honour for any one socially inclined, and when little Lampton found that he, too, had been elected, he became so airy in consequence that there was really no living with him, especially as rumour had it that he would probably be made a corporal in June; for no one came out of plebe camp with a better brace than Lampton, while rooming with a methodical man like Raymond had saved him many a demerit at police inspection.

It was characteristic of Lampton that although he was a good five feet eleven in height, he was invariably called little Lampton by the class, and like many another person, small in character if

not in stature, he was in such constant dread of being managed by some one that it gave him the truculent air of a small bantam rooster in a barn yard full of larger fowl. In fact, it was a joke in the Corps that at class meetings Lampton vehemently opposed any idea presented for his consideration, even going so far as to repudiate a pet scheme of his own were it suggested to him unexpectedly by somebody else.

He was also given to lashing himself into a fury over nothing, seeming always to struggle not so much to control himself as to keep his anger at a white heat, and like others of the same mental calibre he was ever suspicious that he was being made the victim of a conspiracy.

Critical and distrustful of everybody, Lampton sat in constant judgment over his classmates, the Corps, the Tactical Department, and the Academic Board, and in inverse proportion to his lack of ability, he was blustering and aggressive in his manner. In addition to this, he prided himself on his sincerity, his unfailing honesty of purpose, and his lack of all diplomacy.

"I'm not like you, Stirling," he observed one day in early spring, with that irritating air of superiority which belongs to the Pharisee of

every age, "for I always say what I think and think what I say, and nobody can bully me into changing my opinion."

Jack, busily at work cleaning his rifle for Sunday morning inspection, ducked his head that Lampton might not see the sudden amused twitching of his lips, and Lampton went on ponderously:

"I was thinking particularly of your relations with poor old Mizzoo. Now from me, he gets the exact truth as to his ability in his studies, while you shade the truth enough to give him what I should call undue encouragement."

Jack put down his beautifully cleaned rifle, and washed his hands preparatory to sewing on some loose buttons and mending a rent in his dress-coat, rainy Saturdays being devoted to such things.

"You know what we call shading the truth at West Point?" he said at last with ominous quiet.

Lampton saw that he had shot wide of the mark, and immediately readjusted his sights.

"Now, Stirling, I didn't mean that! I only wanted to warn you in the friendliest way in the world, that you oughtn't to buoy up old Mizzoo with false hopes, when his failure to get through

even this year is foreordained. I don't believe in encouraging a man to further effort when he's doomed to defeat from the start. Why, do you realize that, though Raymond studies all the time he hasn't gained a section since January? "

" Well, at least he hasn't gone down a section either, Lampton," returned Jack, " and you must remember that the course isn't a review for Raymond as it is for — some of us."

" But that's just it," interrupted Lampton. " He's nearly three years older than most of the class and yet hasn't been through this elementary work."

Jack laughed outright.

" I wish you knew an old friend of mine, a sergeant in my father's regiment, who is given to saying that a man develops early intellectually because there's so little of him to develop, only Donnelly puts it that it takes less time to make a pop-gun than an up to date rifle; while some one more learned than Donnelly, in so far as books are concerned, for I'd give Donnelly the palm outside of books, declares that the quickest and completest of all vegetables is the cabbage! "

" Well, I'd rather be a good cabbage than a stunted oak," flashed Lampton, " just as I'd

rather be honest and sincere with a few friends than as politic as you are, and class president."

"Politic?" echoed Jack. "Why, what do you mean, Lampton?"

Lampton pitched his voice to the lowest bass he could reach.

"Take Raymond's case," he suggested. "Every one knows you're helping him out for political reasons, his uncle being in the Senate and all that."

Stirling, who was not aware of this interesting fact, flushed hotly at the insinuation, and made Mr. Lampton eat his words. After which, being very young, he proceeded to explain that his interest in Raymond had no ulterior motives, which Lampton accepted with the inscrutable smile he affected on such occasions, this filling Jack with a dull rage at himself for having explained his motives to such a cad, especially as he had done it not to justify himself in Lampton's eyes, but to testify to Raymond's worth as a friend.

Winthrop coming in just then from an extra tour on the area, Lampton straightway departed, and Jack opened his heart to his room-mate, wondering, as so many others have before him,

why it is that people who say disagreeable things both to you and about you are always heralded as honest and sincere, while those who see your good points and speak of them only, are regarded as politic and insincere.

"But Lampton's trying to belittle you is a compliment, Jack," Winthrop urged, "for you know a fellow doesn't take the trouble to belittle any one he considers already beneath him."

Jack shook his head doubtfully, for Lampton's words still rankled.

"Why impute motives to people utterly foreign to their nature?" he went on almost bitterly. "Why not credit them with being at least as frank as yourself? If you know you couldn't do a certain mean, underhanded thing, why jump to the conclusion that your friend could do it? If you're a pretty good sort of chap yourself, why shouldn't you credit the next man with being just as decent, until he proves himself to the contrary?"

Winthrop's dark eyes flashed.

"I believe you made a centre shot that time, Jack," he said, "for it stands to reason you must be honest and sincere yourself before you can

believe in the sincerity and honesty of your neighbour, and if you've never learned to trust yourself you couldn't be expected to trust another."

Slipping off his belts and getting into more comfortable clothes, Winthrop went on in the same philosophic vein:

"I knew a chap once that was saved by a friend's belief in him."

Meeting Jack's questioning eyes, Winthrop turned his own away and after a barely perceptible pause, continued:

"You see, when he was little more than a baby his mother died, and the boy was brought up almost entirely by servants. His father didn't look after him as well as he might have done, for he was a busy man, and — well, perhaps he didn't understand children. Anyway, things weren't as they should have been in that house, for while the servants were never unkind to the boy, they alternately indulged his every caprice or bullied the life out of him, for you can't buy a mother's care with all the money in the world. Being a fairly bright child, he soon found that by a system of petty lies and deceptions he could regulate his life to his own satisfaction, and that

he was no longer nagged or bullied into doing things he didn't want to do.

" As he grew older, he was allowed to go where he pleased, provided one of the men servants in the house accompanied him, but with the same diplomacy that had governed his childhood he managed to go out unattended, and staid away from school weeks at a time without any one discovering it. Then he began to frequent the cheaper theatres of the town, where he was soon hand in glove with a lot of young ruffians, who straightway forgave him even his good clothes by reason of his liberality in standing treat for cigarettes and beer.

" Now bad as all this sounds, the boy wasn't really vicious. But he was weak, and he looked on lying simply as a means to an end, laughing to himself at his father's gullibility, and absolutely scorning the servants for being such easy victims to what he was pleased to consider his superior intelligence. Yet for all his lack of truth, he never told a malicious lie nor kept a malicious silence. Neither did he ever clear himself of wrong doing at another fellow's expense.

" At last he grew up, not so much immoral as unmoral, for half the time he didn't know that

he was doing wrong, and of course, being the son of a very rich man, he had more spending money than was good for him"

Jack nodded understandingly, and Winthrop in a voice that was strained and unnatural went on:

"Well, one day there came into his life a fellow who was the soul of honour. This fellow trusted the other thoroughly, never questioned him in any way, believed him even against his own judgment, until at last, in spite of himself, the boy acquired the habit of truth telling. He could no more have told a lie than could the other fellow. He was saved."

Jack turned his eyes on Winthrop.

"I like that chap," he said softly.

Winthrop's sombre face did not lighten.

"Of course you know I'm telling you my own story?"

Jack nodded a silent assent, then leaning nearer he said quietly:

"But you don't owe the change in yourself to any one person, Tom. You owe it to West Point, and to its splendid standards. There are not many men who come here as fine in character as when they leave and, Tom, old fellow, what-

ever you may have been in the past you're one of the best men in the Corps to-day!"

Winthrop flushed with pleasure at his friend's word of praise, and Jack, anxious to make amends for the past, went on:

"Once — once, Tom, I misjudged you so cruelly that even now I can't bear to speak of it." And then in a voice which trembled in spite of his efforts to control it, Jack told Winthrop of his awful suspicions that day at the board, and how near he had come to taking action on them. At last with a strange new humility he apologized to his friend; but Winthrop, a sickly green pallor creeping over his face, as if he had been stricken ill by the revelation of his friend's hasty judgment, made no reply.

Jack saw the look and winced under it, though realizing he deserved Tom's contempt, and getting up, he laid a pleading hand on the other's shoulder.

"Come now, old fellow," he begged, "don't be too hard on me."

Still Winthrop sat there, apparently too hurt for words.

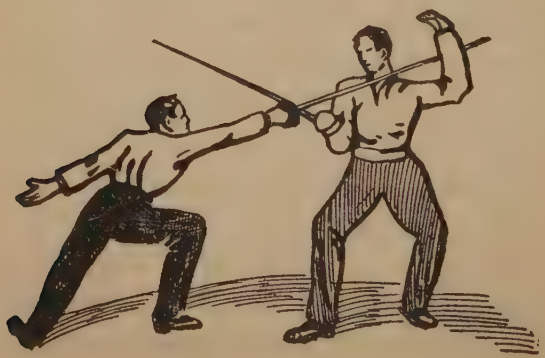
"It isn't like you, Tom, to bear malice towards any one," begged Jack, "and you'll acknowledge I didn't have to tell you of my unjust suspicions.

I might have kept them to myself, only it seemed underhanded to do it. Come now, old chap, be magnanimous."

Winthrop shook Jack's hand off his shoulder and got to his feet.

"Ah, Tom," pleaded Jack. "Remember, I never asked for a proof of your innocence that awful day. When you said you owed your good recitation to me, I believed you instantly, and it did seem queer, Tom, even you'll admit that!" and as he said it Jack looked full into the miserable eyes before him, only to fall back with an exclamation of dismay.

For a long moment they stood there staring at one another; Winthrop, sullen and wretched; Jack, incredulous, shaken, sick at heart.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

It was Winthrop who made the first attempt to speak, but Jack interrupted him with a gesture.

"Don't!" he gasped. "I wasn't trying to pump you, Tom. I just happened on the truth. Oh, Tom — Tom — !" and Jack broke down completely, hiding his convulsed face on his arm.

Winthrop stood quite still, staring out of the window at the sodden parade ground, as he had stood weeks before when it was covered with snow. Now the stately elms that bordered the plain were just beginning to show a feathery green, which with the trunks and branches glistening and black from the recent down-pour made them look like some huge antediluvian fern. For a long time the boy stood there, and though he saw it all half unconsciously the picture was so photographed on his brain that as long as he lived a heavy spring shower would bring it back vividly.

When he turned and looked at Jack again, his face had settled back into the hard old lines that

characterized it before the alchemy of friendship had transmuted the dross of his nature to gold. Seemingly unmoved by Stirling's too evident emotion, he jerked out a defiant:

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

What was he going to do about it? Jack raised a haggard face to Winthrop's sullen one. Four months ago he would have reported Winthrop without a qualm, but now they were friends. He groaned aloud in spite of himself, and turned his eyes away.

He had found so much to like in Winthrop. He was generous to a fault; warm in his friendship; steadfast as a rock; kindly; sympathetic; honest —

Jack quivered at the word. Then remembering the conversation they had just had, he realized that the reformation Winthrop spoke of had come after the January examination, not before, and that Winthrop was guilty not only of cheating then, but of having lived a lie ever since the breaking up of plebe camp, and he — he, Jack Stirling — had made this thing possible.

Looking up again, Stirling met Winthrop's haughty stare. White to the lips, the army boy tried to speak and, at last, after several ineffectual

attempts he managed to stammer out a hesitating:

"I feel sure this all happened before you found yourself, Tom, but — you must resign!" Then gaining courage he went on more naturally: "And you must do it at once."

Winthrop laughed harshly.

"Resign?" he echoed. "And why should I resign, please?"

"Why?" echoed Jack in turn. "Why? Oh, Tom, as if you had to ask," and with a sudden loss of all control, Jack dizzily, blindly, approached his room-mate.

"Tell me it isn't true, Tom! Tell me you just did it to punish me for having doubted you!"

The frozen expression on Winthrop's face melted and broke under Jack's manner as the Hudson opens up in the spring after a hard winter, and the pale lips, that had been tightly pinched together till the skin around them was of a ghastly whiteness, trembled into a smile of compassion for his room-mate's suffering.

"Dear old Jack, don't take it so hard," he begged brokenly. "I'm not worth it, Jack."

Stirling drew back a step.

"Then it *is* true?" he whispered incredulously.

" And what they said of you in camp is true, too? "

Winthrop nodded, and then plead his case to the stern eyes that were passing sentence upon him.

" It isn't as if it had happened lately, Jack," he begged, " and you, yourself, have quoted often that a man is no more responsible for his past sins than for the sins of his neighbour. It happened yesterday, old fellow, and now to-day is here, so well worth living, so — " he stopped abruptly before the accusation in his room-mate's face.

" Don't! " he cried. " Oh, Jack, don't look at me like that! You needn't think I haven't suffered." A spasm of self-pity shook him from head to foot, and he went on more passionately than before:

" Don't you suppose I've been punished, Jack? Don't you think I've endured torments of remorse ever since I woke up to the fact that I had done wrong? Why, each time you and Raymond and Bayard have dwelt on truth and honour and the high ideals of West Point, I've wanted to cry out and confess; every time you've shown your trust and confidence in me, I've been wretched and unhappy; and when they began to talk of making me a corporal in the summer, I purposely

got demerits because I couldn't bear the thought of wearing chevrons under fase pretences; and, if you'll believe it, I've kept from going up a section in 'Math,' and even went down one in French, that no one need be cheated out of any rank through me. I'm willing to graduate 'goat,' Jack, I'm willing to forego class standing, now that I've found my gait. I'm willing to do anything in reason, anything but resign, and I won't do that even if it costs me your friendship to stay here, and your friendship means more to me than everything else on earth."

Jack shivered in spite of himself at Winthrop's passion, but when he spoke his voice was steady.

"Tom," he said gravely, "you've got to go. It's not a matter that can be settled between us. It's not a question of punishment, or of whether or not you lose my friendship by keeping still about it." He paused a moment and his tanned face went strangely white. "If you don't put in your resignation, Winthrop, I shall report you to the authorities and to the class!"

Winthrop started back as if Jack had struck him.

"You would report me?" he cried. "*You?*"

For a moment the men looked each other

squarely in the eye. Then Winthrop laughed his old reckless laugh.

"What proof have you that I cheated?" he demanded. "And what can you tell the authorities and the class when they ask why you have been silent so long on the subject?" His voice rose with excitement. "It's a game two can play at, Stirling, and I shall say this is all the result of a quarrel, so whether they force me out or not, you will be branded as a coward and a sneak, a coward for having kept still when you knew the truth, and a sneak for telling it merely in revenge."

"You mean you would lie about it?" put in Jack sternly.

"And why not?" jeered Winthrop. "If I could cheat at examinations, and make a false official statement under oath at a court-martial, couldn't I lie to clear myself in a little matter like this?"

Jack looked at his room-mate closely, and his eyes softened ever so little.

"No, Tom," he answered quietly, "you couldn't lie about it now, even to save yourself. Four months ago you might have done it, but now you couldn't. No, not if your life were at stake."

"Well, and if I've changed so, why report me?"

Winthrop pleaded. " It's like holding me accountable for the sins of somebody else, for I *am* different now," his voice broke, " so different that I couldn't lie to save myself. I'm at your mercy, Jack."

Stirling weakened in spite of himself. He had grown to love Winthrop. He wanted to save him, and after all, he had no proof of the boy's guilt except his own confession. Nobody would ever know. Why, within the last week some of the class had begun to speak to Winthrop again. He had even been mentioned for corporal's chevrons in June. He had come through the furnace of social ostracism refined in every way. Graham of the third class had said but a week before that it was only a matter of time when Winthrop would prove his right to graduate at West Point. In his opinion the plebe had been " cut " unjustly, and the Corps owed him an apology. Why not keep still about it all? Why not let things drift? With the exception of Raymond, Jack liked Winthrop better than any one at the Academy. Why should he take it upon himself to expose him?

He clenched his hands hard, shut his eyes for better concentration of thought, and after a moment or two of silence looked compassionately at his friend.

" Tom," he began softly, " you've just acknowledged you couldn't lie to save yourself! "

The other boy nodded eagerly, and Jack turned his head away to shut out the look of hope on Winthrop's face.

"Well, if you couldn't lie to save yourself, Tom," he went on, " would you have me to lie to save you? For it would be a living lie, not only through the three years ahead of us but for all time."

Winthrop did not reply, and Jack went on in the curiously even tone of one who is keeping his self-control by a struggle.

" You know, Tom, that a man's standing on the delinquency list at West Point or his grade in the section room affects him not only through the course here, but through his entire official life. My father was ranked one-tenth by the man next above him in his class, and that man got the last vacancy in artillery. You see, father was awfully keen about going into artillery because of his scientific tastes, and while he never regretted his cavalry service on the plains, still he was not given the choice of the two branches, as would have happened if the other man had not ranked him by that tenth. Now, to be ranked honestly is bad enough, but to be ranked by a man who

cheated — " Jack choked on the word, recovered himself, and then went on more calmly:

" Why, Tom, a man detected even shading the truth here in regard to his standing, either in the section room or the battalion, would be ruined with the Corps forever; and I know you well enough to be quite sure that if you should go through the four years and graduate at the Academy, you'd be a very unhappy man, not only that you had lived a lie yourself, but that you had let me live one, and I'm certain a commission won at such a cost would be a curse instead of a blessing."

Stirred to his very depths, Winthrop turned impulsively towards Jack.

" You're right, old fellow," he cried. " I can't stay here, and I can't enter the army. It wouldn't be fair and above-board. And I appreciate your letting me resign without any one knowing the reason. It would about kill the Governor." He held out a shaking hand to Jack.

" I give you my word — my word of honour," both boys winced at the obvious pause, " that I will put in my resignation within ten days, and Jack, dear old Jack, don't think too bitterly of me."

Stirling's mouth quivered piteously.

"I like you better now than ever before, Tom, and you can't realize how much it costs me to take the stand I have."

"Oh, but I do realize," interrupted Winthrop. "A year ago I shouldn't have understood, but West Point has taught me many things, and you, Jack, have shown me not only how to be decent myself but how to credit my neighbour with being at least as decent as I am."

A week later Winthrop put in his resignation, and when it was finally accepted, Jack, Raymond, and Bayard accompanied him to the top of the hill by the Administration Building, all four men as near tears as men ever come. Several times they said the final farewell, but Winthrop could not tear himself away. At last Bayard and Raymond managed to blurt out awkward thanks for Winthrop's assistance in their academic work that winter.

Winthrop choked.

"Cut it out, fellows," he said slangily, "I hate to be thanked for anything, and you've all three given me more than I deserve in trust and confidence. But at least I can try to live up to your belief in me," and with an affectionate bear hug

all around, he was swinging down the hill, his heart in his throat, but his shoulders squared back as he had been taught, his handsome head held high.

"What a different Winthrop from the one who drove up that very hill not a year ago," mused Raymond. "Do you remember his carriage passing us, Jack, the day we reported?"

Jack nodded a silent assent, and waved a last farewell to Winthrop, who had turned the corner near the Riding Hall.

"And his monocle," went on Raymond in affectionate reminiscence, "and his checked suit made in the exaggerated London fashion of last year so that it didn't touch him anywhere; though if it had, he couldn't have worn it off to-day!"

"He was such a fine fellow," Bayard put in shyly, "the very soul of honour. I'm sorry he had to go just now, for I think he'd have made as good a yearling corporal as Graham!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

At " reveille " on June first the Corps resumed the wearing of white trousers, these to be uniform until October, thus heralding the beginning of the summer season and of good times generally, a veritable flag of truce to the Academic Board that hostilities were to be suspended until fall. For even with the agony of approaching examinations hanging over them, the cadets felt they had really reached the end of the year, once they appeared in spotless white, above which gray coats, fitting snugly, displayed every line of the well set-up young figures, the cadet officers' uniform being further glorified by red sashes, much gold lace, and plumed hats.

The day before, the plebes had " graduated " from fencing and gymnastics, fourth classmen only being instructed therein, and at the official weighing and measuring that followed, hardly a man but showed not only a gain in avoirdupois but an increase as to chest, forearm, upper arm, and calf of

leg, some of the younger men topping their last year's height by as much as an inch.

Raymond, in particular, had developed from a slender stripling of a boy, narrow chested and a little stooped, to one of the best set-up men in the class; but the change had been so gradual that neither he nor his friends had realized the difference until confronted by his record of the previous year. Then it was found he was not only ten pounds heavier, but that his measurements compared favourably with those of the criterion of the Corps, handsome Jack Stirling.

Old Grizzly even went so far as to compliment Raymond on his soldierly appearance, which at any other time would have put him in the Seventh Heaven of delight. But with the awful ordeal of examinations before him, Raymond could think of nothing else, this absent-minded manner, which even a year of military discipline had not been able to overcome, costing the boy several demerits since the first of May.

In vain Stirling had remonstrated with his friend, trying to point out that any one who had stood so well since January was sure to pass; but Raymond, who had a talent for seeing the dark side of everything, felt sure he would either lose

a class at his examination or perhaps be dropped altogether. In addition, it seems that his relatives felt he was not doing his best at West Point as that first year at Columbia he had stood well in his class, while here he was almost at the foot of it in French and was only in the fourth section in Mathematics, his monthly grades convincing the family that he was either idling his time away, or that the institution was a poor one, the unimportant drills and parades interfering with the main object in life, which was to give him an education.

Stirling, who felt it no disgrace to be excelled in class standing if a fellow had honestly done the best he could, and who would rather have won corporal's chevrons at the end of the year than have come out in the first five, listened with a puzzled frown to the man whose family actually advised him to resign rather than stand so low in the class.

And to think they could have imagined for one moment that Mizzoo had not been doing his best — dear, old, plodding Mizzoo, who had to be dragged away from his books on Saturday night and who had served several confinements for being caught after " Taps " with a light.

But it seems the family felt hurt that Raymond should be serving confinements at all, and they were more than grieved he had six demerits to his account in one month, so small a number that but ten in the class could show as good a record; some, in fact, like Riggs and Gronna, considering it a mark of brilliancy to have a long demerit list and seeming rather proud of it.

Jack was sympathetic and Raymond unburdened his soul, confessing that his nervous and excitable disposition had been his chief stumbling block ever since coming to the Academy, for though he often got up in class with a well prepared lesson, he became so confused that it gave the instructor an idea he didn't know much about it, and he was marked accordingly. Indeed, Raymond felt that if examinations were written instead of oral he could be sure of passing creditably, but as it was he had his doubts, and he wound up his jeremiad with a miserable:

"It would be hard enough sledding, Jack, without the family taking me to task in every letter, but as it is I believe I shall follow their advice and put in my resignation at once, rather than risk failing before the Academic Board."

Startled beyond words, Jack looked up from the

bit of brass he was polishing. It was bad enough to have Raymond's family suggest such a thing, but that Raymond, after a year at the Academy, could contemplate the step was inconceivable. Suppose he did stand low in the class, wasn't it preferable to resigning? Wasn't it manlier in any event to stay and fight for a better record? Why, it was almost like retreating on the eve of battle!

This military turn of thought reminded Stirling of something, and he put aside his belt plate and pulled open a drawer of the table. Securing a number of letters there, he searched through them for a moment and then drew out a thick, ink-smeared envelope.

Raymond, watching him moodily, smiled in spite of himself.

"Even across the room I seem to recognize Sergeant Donnelly's familiar fist," he said. "Has he been writing you the latest news of Sammy Jr., or does this letter deal entirely with the quartermaster's bull-pup?"

Jack thrust the ink-smeared epistle into Raymond's hands.

"On reading it you'll think the sergeant had you in mind, Mizzoo," he said with quiet emphasis, "only as it happens, the letter is in answer to

one of mine in which I mentioned that Scott of the third class had resigned rather than risk another examination."

"At the beginning of furlough, too!" mused Raymond half to himself.

"Yes," answered Jack, "and our class has yearling camp ahead of it, Raymond, as an incentive to stay and sweat it through. But read what Donnelly has to say on the subject. No, not there. It begins at the bottom of the third page, I think."

Raymond looked up from the clumsily written sheet.

"The sergeant doesn't allow himself to be trammelled by any artificial rules of spelling," he smiled, and then read the letter aloud from the point indicated:

"Tell any friends of yrs, Mr. Jack, that think of resinein to stick by there guns even if they see the *enemy* ganein on em. Tell em to march inter the thick of the fite with there colours flyin' & there drums beatin. Tell em if there goin to fale to fale on the firein line, to fite to the death, tho I woodent be sprised if the feller that had gritt enuf to stick it thru, woodent fale at all in the end.

"Now from what Ive heard tell of the Point,

Ime thinkin book learnin is the leest of what you get nocked inter you there, & that, after all, its what you get nocked out of you that counts most.

" For instance, theres that Akerdemik Board that you say plum skeers the cadets outer there wits, & from what you rote me last Janyouary I shoud think it wood. In fact I reckon its somethin like a Injun campane with all the Injuns in war paint, a-brandy-shing there Tommy Hawks like they couldent wate to git yr. scalp, & you a-tremblin in yr. regerlashun boots cause you sudinly remembered yr. ammunition was most run out.

" Well sir, Mr. Jack, just becaws a feller *is* skeered, he oughter grit his teeth hard, draw in his catrige belt a mite, & hold his rifle redy for any emergincy. For if he cant face the Akerdemik Board as a cadet, he wont be able to face the *enemy* as a orficer.

" Why bless my brass buttons, Mr. Jack, it aint enuff to say we done our best in life — the work must *show* it — the results *prove* it, sir. Take the feller that nose his rithmetic from addition up to fracktions, but who gets it skeered outer him by the Akerdemik Board at eggsaminshuns, aint it likely by the same tokin hede get his

nolige of tactics skeered outer him in the feeld, so that he mite order a retreet in the face of the ENEMY or march his MEN into ambush, or any ways lose the batle?

" Yes sir, Mr. Jack, its morean likely, & the eggscuse he was eggscited & nervus woodent clear him none when the inspecter looked up his case. No, not if he knew his tactics from beginin to end, sir!

" So tell any of yr. friends that contimplate resinein for fear of the Akerdemik Board, to stick it thru, Mr. Jack, & if they finds there catriges give out, let em use the butt of there rifles, & if the rifles get nocked outer there grasp, why let em use there fists.

"Yes sir, Mr. Jack, tell em to fite to the last gasp, & never say *die* to *nobody*, whether its Akerdemik Boards or Injuns or any kind of ENEMY. Tell em from an old soldier to stick it thru, Mr. Jack, & whether there side wins or loses, theyll allways be on good terms with theirselves."

Raymond's voice trailed off strangely on the last words, but he re-read the letter to himself not once, but twice. Then turning to Jack, he said very quietly:

"The sergeant evidently means 'To every coward safety, and afterwards his evil hour,' and, Jack, I never thought of it before as cowardice — resigning from West Point, I mean, and I'm going to stick it through, old man, so that if I fail it will be on the firing line!"

Before Jack could answer, Riggs had poked his red head around the door.

"What's that about the firing line, Mizzoo?" he demanded.

Stirling explained that Raymond intended to "do up" the Academic Board at examinations, whereupon Riggs chuckled delightedly.

"Sic 'em, Mizzoo," he urged as if to a fighting dog. "Tear 'em up! Eat 'em alive! What's the Academic Board anyway but a lot of overripe cadets? What are the instructors but so many old graduates? Don't you suppose they've all trembled at these very blackboards, just as we're doing to-day? Don't you suppose they've 'bugled it' in their time? Or tried to keep a new instructor busy answering questions through most of the hour? Or assumed an air of eager expectancy to be allowed to go to the board when that was the one thing they wanted to avoid that day?"

Raymond threw back his head and laughed

more heartily than he had done in weeks, then sobering down a bit, he asked how Gronna was getting along with his work.

Riggs made a wry face.

" I only wish he had half your chance, Mizzoo. Poor chap! He's in the room now, a wet towel around his head, and old Bradley loading him to the muzzle with ' Math '."

" Aren't you afraid that red hair of his will set fire to the ammunition and cause a premature explosion? " chuckled Raymond.

" Well, the ' Math's ' dry enough to burn, goodness knows," retorted Riggs, and then more soberly:

" I tell you what it is, fellows, the sight of poor old Gronna ' boning ' away there day and night, with some of the first section men running details to help him out in both ' Math ' and French, has sobered me down considerably; for I can't help feeling I'm more than half responsible for his standing so low in the class, and that perhaps I was the cause of Burges being found in January."

" You see," went on Riggs regretfully, " I've never had any ambition except to graduate foot of the class since I can't graduate one, preferring to take the booby prize than no prize at all. As

I reasoned it out, I wasn't hurting anybody but myself by disobeying regulations, not studying, and all that. But lately I've begun to think that's the very thing that hurts the Corps after all, the dodging of personal responsibility, you know, the playing hooky, as it were, with ourselves. In fact, that it's awfully B. J. to do things here at the Point that if all the Corps followed suit would wreck the Academy. For instance, I know that I've made Gronna as trifling as I am, while poor old Burges must have found it hard to do any serious work with the two of us poking fun at him all the time for being such a dig."

Jack looked up from a collar he was crimping, preparatory to pinning it on his dress-coat.

"I don't think you ought to lay Burges' failure to your account," he said judicially, "for it must be admitted that when Burges 'began to have whiskers he left off having brains.' As for Gronna, I'm sure he'll pass with men like Bradley and Bruce and Marr to prime him, and such a good natured old file as his instructor to pull the lanyard."

"But he's scared stiff about the whole business,"

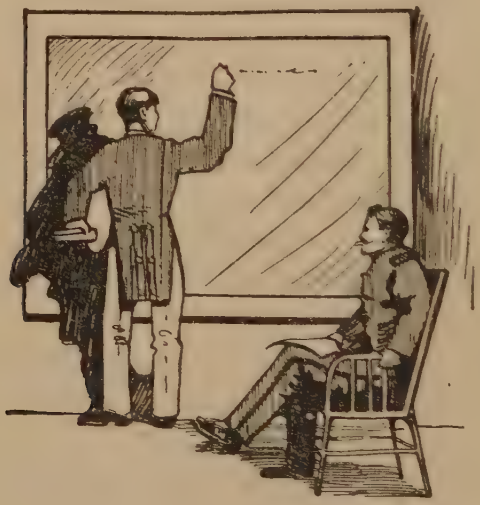
groaned Riggs, "and you know as well as I do that coolness is indispensable to a fellow on trial for his official scalp."

"Give him a dose of Donnelly's patent nerve reviver," suggested Raymond, and at a nod from Jack he proceeded to read Donnelly's characteristic letter aloud to Riggs. This resulted in Riggs carrying off the document to help hearten up Gronna, who was as far down in the depths as a person of his temperament — and hair — ever gets.

So all unconsciously Jack's old friend was responsible for at least two of the class entering on their examinations like young Davids going out to slay their Goliaths with only a sling and a stone; Raymond, in particular, being so buoyed up by this new found belief in himself that he entered the examination room so confident, so strong, so self-reliant in manner that his instructor noted the change, and wrongly inferred that he had drawn an easy subject from the folded slips on the table.

Fortunately for Raymond, he opened the slip with his back to the room or every one on the Academic Board would have seen the spasm that distorted his face as he read it over, for it was so

difficult a subject in Geometry that even a first or second section man might have quailed before it, while to one in the fourth section it practically meant defeat.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Half dazed, he heard this classmate or that recite, and was conscious of the professor's quick, snappy questions, and the instructor's slower method of bringing out what a man knew or did not know of the subject under discussion.

On one side of him, Doolittle, a Kansas boy, hesitated over dividing similar polygons into the same number of triangles, similar each to each, and similarly placed, a problem Raymond felt half bitterly that he could have solved with his eyes shut and his hands tied behind him. On the other side, a rather stocky young man from Kalamazoo inscribed a regular hexagon in a given circle, his childish, uneven figures wandering over the board perilously near where Raymond was vainly endeavouring to solve his own very difficult problem.

He had gone so far as to write the given data in proper forms, after which he stood clutching at a piece of chalk, his eyes fixed vacantly on the board in front of him.

What was it Sergeant Donnelly had said about courage on the firing line? He couldn't seem to remember. He had forgotten everything but that awe inspiring array of professors and instructors, all in full uniform. Vaguely he realized that none of the garrison people were present, nor any one from the Board of Visitors, for it was a blustering, stormy day that ought by rights to have been early in March rather than early in June. At least he would have no witnesses to his failure, aside from the Academic Board and some classmate behindhand in his own work. Through the back of his dress-coat he could seem to feel the professor's keen brown eyes scanning the board, empty of everything but the first bare outline of the problem in question, his beautiful writing and careful figures in marked contrast to the work on either side.

If he passed this examination, he would be a yearling instead of a plebe, with all the joys of yearling camp ahead of him! But could he pass it?

Again and again he tried to concentrate his mind on the problem he was to solve, but his old fear of the Academic Board was upon him stronger than ever, and besides, the problem

was a very difficult one. How hot he was, and how his head throbbed, while the general outline of the work swam before his eyes in lines of fire, one little point always evading him, one little point and he could go on.

Fifteen minutes passed; a half hour; forty-five minutes; and still Raymond stood there motionless.

At last, feeling he could do no more, and realizing the hopelessness of trying to "bugle" it, he whirled around mechanically and faced the Academic Board. As in a dream he saw his instructor's worried look, and the indifferent air of the other officers, this making more apparent the sudden glance that pierced him through and through from the professor's keen eyes.

White to the lips, Raymond drooped visibly before the approaching storm as heralded by the ominous lowering of the professor's heavy brows, and he felt rather than heard that gentleman's voice thundering at him, and realized that soon he would be swept off his feet by the onrushing flood of admonition, for while the professor would have hesitated to shame the boy before the Board of Visitors, he did not hint a fault now, but let his trenchant disapproval fall like hail upon the

plebe's luckless head, the storm growing in volume and force with every word.

That the professor of Mathematics was the most kindly of men, Raymond did not know for years to come; nor was he aware that his seeming disparagement and denunciation were but methods used to galvanize cadets into action of some kind. But suddenly it had the desired effect, for with a start Raymond awakened to what the professor was saying, his every word as cutting to the boy's sensitive soul as a verbal east wind, but a wind that swept aside the haze which had enveloped him.

" The Mathematical Department can get along very well without men of your mental calibre, Mr. Raymond," he concluded, " very well indeed, sir, and I must say it is incredible to me that a man of your average good marks since January, should make such a poor showing at examination. Why, sir, a gentleman in the last section would be ashamed to fail without at least an effort to retrieve himself, and although I admit you have drawn one of the most difficult subjects of the day, yet it surprises me to see a gentleman in the fourth section fail unconditionally, unconditionally, sir! "

Something seemed to waken Raymond to immediate action. What had the professor said? That he had failed, and failed unconditionally at that? Oh, no, a thousand times, no!

As in a flash the little point that had evaded him came to mind and he was sure that he could solve the problem now, did the professor but give him a chance. Why was the Academic Board delaying him anyway, when every moment was precious? The colour rushed back into his white face and he straightened up stiffly, at which the professor, used to just such an effect from his slightest word, smiled into his moustache, though his brows were still drawn into that ominous line that met just above his nose.

"Well, Mr. Raymond," he demanded, "have you anything to say, sir?"

The plebe was mentally working out the problem on the board behind him, his slow, methodical mind stirred for once into daring leaps. He could see the theorem proving itself before his eyes.

It was his — *his* — and yet the professor just said he had failed. With a quick glance at the clock, he began stiffly:

"If you please, Professor, I still have ten minutes

of the hour left and if you will give me the time, I can prove this theorem, sir. And — and I don't consider for one moment I have failed, Professor. In fact, you couldn't find me deficient in Mathematics if you wanted to, sir."

"What?" roared the professor, jumping from his chair in sheer amazement at the fourth classman's audacity. "Why, what do you mean, sir? What do you mean, I say?"

The other members of the Board sat up very straight, while the young instructor stared incredulously at Raymond, and tugged at his blond moustache, very much embarrassed and not a little amused, for it was the first time in his experience either as a cadet or an instructor, that any one had bearded the mathematical lion in his den.

Raymond saw the different expressions on the faces before him in a queer, impersonal way, and heard himself reply:

"I mean, Professor, that you can't find me deficient in Mathematics because I know the subject too well. If you will give me the time remaining of the hour I am sure I can prove the theorem on the board to your satisfaction, sir."

The professor choked, turned very red, took

out his glasses, and after polishing them carefully with his handkerchief, said:

That will do, Mr. Raymond, — er — suppose you finish the work on the board, before you — er — challenge the Academic Board to find you deficient in Mathematics, sir. Yes, Mr. Raymond, you are at liberty to begin at once, sir!"

In a moment Raymond had faced about, stripped off his white gloves, and was at work, the chalk flying in every direction. Filled with a curious elation, he wrote and figured and figured and wrote, as if in a race against time. With magical swiftness the neat figures grew under his nervous hand, the whole board presenting an appearance that made the instructor smile as he took note of it. In less than five minutes, Raymond had shaken himself free from chalk, and drawing on his gloves, he turned once again to face the Academic Board arrayed against him, giving that important body of men as delightful an exhibition of geometric reasoning as they had ever listened to.

Throughout the recitation Raymond's instructor tugged at his long moustache continuously, a sign the cadets invariably interpreted as a 2.9 at the least, while the professor, rolling a pencil between his hands, sat on the edge of his chair

ready to jump at the first false statement. But Raymond, calm as if talking to one of his own classmates, rattled through the theorem without having been interrupted once in his process of reasoning. Then he stood respectfully at attention, the pointer resting on the floor in front of him.

The professor of Mathematics drew a long breath, after which he asked Raymond a few difficult questions pertaining to the subject. These Raymond answered with a coolness that surprised himself, the professor meanwhile nodding his head approvingly while the instructor continued to pull at his long moustache.

"Very well, Mr. Raymond," said the professor at last. "That will do, sir." Then with a sudden admiration for the boy's spirit, "And I don't mind saying right here, Mr. Raymond, that as long as you continue to make recitations like that, you can continue to challenge the Academic Board to find you deficient in Mathematics," and a quizzical smile spread in radiating lines from the brown eyes to be lost in the meshes of the snowy moustache.

Raymond read the smile aright, and knew that he had not only come out victorious in this second

battle with the Academic Board, but that the spoils of the conqueror would be a " clean max " to his credit.

With the exception of Riggs and Gronna, all of Stirling's special friends came out very well at the June examinations, Raymond, Bayard, and Stirling himself, gaining three or four files over their January general standing. But Gronna found himself in the " Immortals," and Riggs two sections lower in both French and Mathematics, than before the examinations nailed him to the cross of his idleness.

Then events succeeded each other so rapidly that the fourth classmen were fairly bewildered, for aside from the glorious privilege of being free from reveille until eight in the evening to go anywhere on the post they pleased, providing, of course, it did not interfere with parades and drills and roll calls, they were in a continuous state of excitement over the arrival of some distinguished visitor or other, on the post, while above all was the joy of having the dreaded examinations over and the year's work well behind them.

The graduation hop put the exclamation point on a week of unalloyed happiness. It was then the plebes lost their " Mister," and according to

West Point custom were accepted as equals by the Corps, their first social appearance being prepared for weeks in advance, when they drew dancing pumps and hop gloves from the commissary, putting aside their "spooniest" white trousers for the great occasion, and polishing up the buttons of their dress-coats till they would have served as so many mirrors.

The hop managers for the coming summer were especially anxious as to their appearance, though hardly a man in all the class but would have made a good colour sentinel from the top of his closely cropped head to the point of his new patent leather pumps, and no *debutante* at her first ball ever felt a more delightful flutter than did these young men, who at the door of the hop room burst the chrysalis of plebedom to emerge full fledged cadets with all the joys of yearling camp ahead of them.

Hung with flags, and further decorated with palms and plants the ball-room looked most unlike the sombre place where the written examinations had been held, and to the Corps in general, and the plebes in particular, every girl there was a belle and a beauty, every matron a vision of gracious loveliness.

To more cosmopolitan eyes than those of the plebes the scene was a brilliant one, for aside from handsome gowns and jewels, there were army officers in full dress uniform, representing all branches of the service, and all ranks from major-general down to second lieutenant; cadets resplendent in dazzling white trousers and snug fitting gray coats, with here and there a chevron and crimson sash to gild the refined gold of their bell buttons; while the few black coated civilians lounging against the walls looked most incongruous when contrasted with their gold-laced, uniformed brothers.

In the receiving line with the Commandant's wife and the Superintendent's niece stood Faulkner, his bell buttons seeming to have a greater lustre than any others in the room, his chevrons to be more glittering, his crimson sash brighter. Strong and splendidly proportioned, he towered above the other heads around him, graciously bending as he spoke a name here, shook a hand there, or reminded the Commandant's wife that the little man approaching was a prominent member of the Board of Visitors, the Commandant's wife having a memory as short-sighted as her eyes.

With that shibboleth of small talk which dis-

tinguishes the social Ephraimite from the Gileadite pretender, Faulkner welcomed everybody, seeming to have as good a memory for names as he had for faces, so that all who came within the radius of his smile felt unconsciously warmed by it.

To the plebes, standing around in awkward little groups and vainly trying not to appear like plebes nor address upper classmen as "Mister" and "Sir," Faulkner seemed the personification of elegance; and when the dancing had really begun and the Commandant's wife was seated where she could keep an eye on the door for belated guests their admiration turned to adoration; for, remembering his own first ball at West Point, Faulkner looked up the fourth classmen, who straightway forgot their timidity under the impetus of having such a high ranking cadet officer slap them familiarly on the back, and call them by name.

Presently, too, without their understanding in the least how it was done, he had taken them up to different girls, such very nice girls, who plainly showed they were more than willing to be on with the new yearling class before they were off with the old, or rather before the old was off on

furlough. Some of the men took to the social side of cadet life with more avidity than they had ever shown for the academic or tactical side; though a few of the class, like Jack Stirling, Raymond, and Chevalier Bayard, preferred the Oriental method of looking on while others danced for them.

Coming upon Stirling, standing for a moment by himself at the hop room door, Faulkner carried him off in triumph, deaf to Jack's protests that he had no ambition to be a "spoonoid" and simply wanted to look on.

"Nonsense!" Faulkner said, and without further ado Jack found himself bowing to this girl or that, all ready to smile upon the handsome yearling, that rumour had it would be made first corporal on the morrow.

There was the Adjutant's niece, a pretty, vivacious girl, simply loaded down with bell buttons and visibly ready for more; there was a New York beauty, haughty and cold, with eyebrows raised in perpetual protest at other people's social lapses; there were twin sisters from the South, and so alike that Jack was almost certain he had been introduced twice to the same one; there was a gushing boarding school miss, not yet

out of short dresses; and a tall, bean-pole of a woman who, according to rumour, had been coming to West Point since the Superintendent's plebe year, but who danced so well that her age was forgiven her.

There were all sorts and conditions of girls, blonde and brunette, short and tall, fat and thin, pretty and plain, clever and stupid. They wore gowns from Paris, or book muslins made up by some country dressmaker. Their hair was arranged in an elaborate coiffure of puffs and waves and curls, or simply coiled in the neck, or braided down the back. They wore ornaments varying from priceless jewels to a rose or a bow of ribbon, and all and individually smiled their sweetest on the man who was vouched for by the great Faulkner.

At each introduction Jack bowed in a stiff, military way, and mumbled something politely non-committal to the effect that he was greatly honoured. Faulkner remonstrated with Stirling, and told him that his chevrons would exact something from him in the social line, and that he should accept the hops and band concerts as part of his West Point training.

"I know it!" Jack answered regretfully, and

then with a little shame-faced grin: "But really, Faulkner, I'm not used to girls, you know, and I simply hate to dance, and — "

But Faulkner had halted him once again in front of a fluffy white skirt, the ruffles of which were caught up here and there with bunches of purple violets. That much Jack saw before he raised his eyes, while Faulkner's laughing voice was asking the wearer of the fluffy gown to take Jack in hand.

"He's the finest fellow in the Corps from a military standpoint," he insisted, "but a social mutineer. Won't you undertake to make him a 'spoonoid,' please?"

Very much embarrassed, half at Faulkner's bantering manner, half at his commendation, Jack looked up from the violet-trimmed flounces to the face of the girl beside him.

With a little gasp of surprise he recognized Marie Harding.

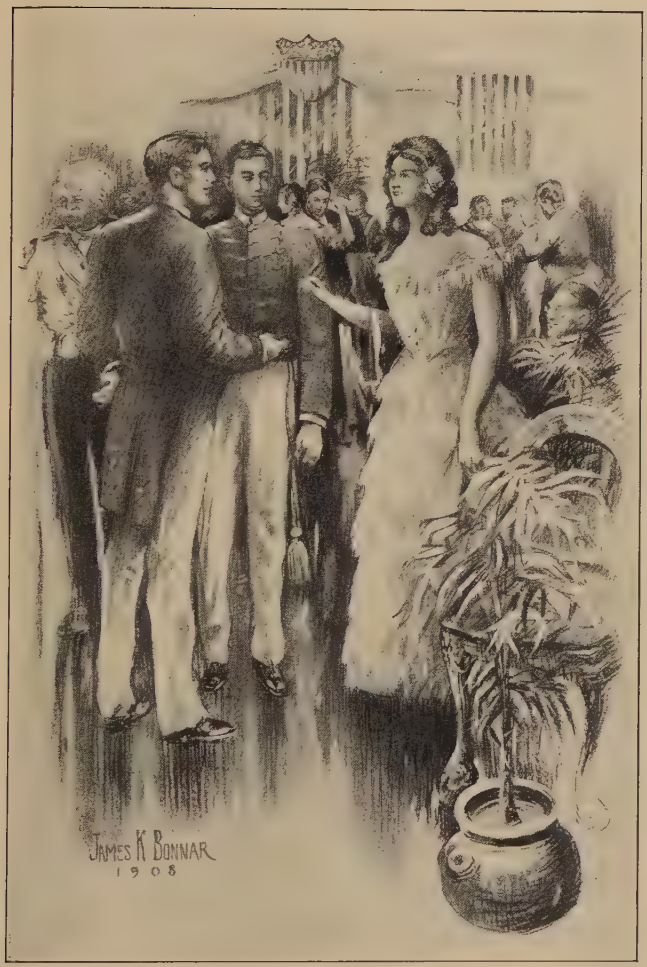
CHAPTER NINETEEN

"I THINK Mr. Stirling and I have met before," Marie said quietly, though her eyes were dancing with fun.

The first classman looked properly mystified, at which Jack, quite forgetting his embarrassment, explained that it had been long ago as children in Montana, but Miss Harding interposed a quiet word to the effect that they had met again the previous summer when Jack reported at the Academy.

Stirling blushed violently, and Faulkner, remembering the incident and how Jack had paid for it throughout plebe camp, laughed a little; whereupon the girl, blushing herself, apologized handsomely for having caused her old friend so much embarrassment by her ignorance of West Point customs.

Jack liked her direct manner and the frank way she had of looking him straight in the eye, quite as if she had been another boy, and he



"'I THINK MR. STIRLING AND I HAVE MET BEFORE,' MARIE SAID QUIETLY."

liked her apology for having unwittingly been the cause of his misery the previous summer. So, very much in the same spirit that Marie tried to make amends for her inadvertence, Jack absolved her of all wrong doing and put her quite at ease by a laughing allusion to the fact that they were at last quits for the time he had stolen her best doll and played Indian with it.

Faulkner was immensely amused, and pleased as well that Jack had found his tongue, so when a waltz struck up he left them together.

Miss Harding turned to Jack in the fearless way characteristic of her, with a half laughing:

"Well, and aren't you going to ask me for a dance, Mr. Stirling?"

Jack gulped.

"If you were any one else, Marie," he declared, "I suppose the polite thing to say would be that I didn't dare hope you had a dance left, but to tell the truth, I'm afraid to try it. I was the instructor's despair last year in dancing."

Marie was much amused.

"And if you were any one else," she laughed, "I shouldn't dare tell you that I had my partner save a couple of dances, hoping you'd come up for them," and she held out her programme where,

sure enough, the two succeeding dances were disengaged.

Jack, trembling in his brand new pumps, rose to the occasion bravely.

"Well, if you aren't afraid to try me — " he began, but the girl interrupted with a quiet:

"Oh, you needn't assume that martyred air, Jack Stirling. I'm not going to ask you to dance. But I'd like to talk over old times, and should also be more than glad to meet some of your classmates."

So Jack, little dreaming that the belle of the ball was honouring him, carried her off on his arm to a sheltered window where they were soon deep in the latest news of the old regiment.

Had Jack heard that they might be ordered away from Leavenworth in the fall? Did he know that Dodson of E troop had been made a first lieutenant within the last fortnight? Had any one told him that little Jim Lewis stood one in his class at Yale, and that Dick Richards was on the foot-ball team? Oh, and wasn't it funny to think of Tommie Turner studying art in Paris? And did he know that Franklin Scott was going to the Boston "Tech"? And that Harold Gregory, though standing well at Princeton where he was

one of the leading athletes of the class, was straining every nerve for an appointment "at large" to the Academy? And hadn't Big Ben developed into the nicest sort of a fellow since the old days in Montana?

Of course he knew about Sergeant Donnelly's marriage to Dinah? And had he heard that Dinah refused to have anything to do with the wives of mere privates, now that she was married to the ranking first sergeant of the regiment?

And, yes, wasn't it glorious that Jack's mother and the baby were to come on for a short visit during yearling camp? Jack would be crazy over Samuel Donnelly, Jr., as the sergeant always called him. He was the most wonderful baby in the regiment, and already, it seemed, when shown his brother's cadet picture he could say "Jack" as plain as any one, and also when asked how much he loved Jack he would hug his own fat, little body and make sundry noises interpreted by a fond mother to mean "more than tongue can tell."

It was all so entertaining that Jack quite forgot, till the beginning of the second dance, he ought to introduce some of his classmates to Marie, but in a few moments he had her quite surrounded

by a number of cronies, among them Raymond, Bayard, and little Riggs.

To their own great surprise, the new yearlings straightway forgot that but yesterday they had been mere plebes, so interested was the handsome Miss Harding in all they had to say; so ready with her appreciative laugh at Riggs' funny stories, kept in pickle for just such an occasion; so pleased to turn over her card for the hop three weeks from that night to Lampton; and the one a week from that to Riggs, who was mentally keelhauling himself for not having asked her before Lampton did; while Bayard found balm in her friendly speeches for having tripped and fallen with his first and only partner that evening, the combination of tight new pumps and a highly polished floor proving too much for his awkwardness.

When dashing Bob Graham finally came up for his dance with Miss Harding, he stared in amazement to see her surrounded by members of the third class, and to the delight of those socially inclined intimated that they were mighty lucky yearlings — yearlings, mark you! — to have met the most popular girl on the post at their very first dance.

Miss Harding turned to her new friends with a deprecating laugh.

"What is a girl to do when a man compliments her in that sledge hammer way?" she protested.

"But you're so skilful parrying sword thrusts," he excused himself, "that the only way to get a compliment in is to club you over the head with it."

"So you always render the enemy defenceless before attacking him!" she mocked. "And you a West Pointer!"

Just then they swung off in a waltz, and the girl, who carried herself like a yearling corporal, smiled back over Graham's shoulder at her new friends by the window. And whenever she passed them in waltz or polka during the remainder of the evening, she nodded gaily while once, when Raymond sprang forward to hand her a programme that had dropped, she even remembered his name, which was quite intoxicating.

Early next morning the President and the Secretary of War arrived on the post, amidst the thunder of guns, and right after guard-mounting came a review in their honour. When this was over the first class was escorted to a pavilion in front of the Library, where the cadets stacked

arms and took their places for the graduating ceremony.

First came a speech by a well-known Senator on the Board of Visitors, a brilliant burst of eloquence, short and to the point; after which old General Gray addressed the graduates in a few well chosen words, but so poorly delivered that all realized the grizzly, bearded veteran of many campaigns was more successful fighting Indians than delivering orations, and at last came the bestowal of diplomas by the President, who, in his seat of honour, had been stared out of countenance during that hour and a half.

The unexpected glory of having their diplomas handed them by the President of the United States caused quite a flutter among the graduates, and when the honour man of the class, who graduated higher than any one ever had at the Academy, stepped up for his diploma,the President not only shook him by the hand, as he afterward did all the others, but in addition congratulated him on the fine record he was leaving behind, a nice little speech that remained a life legacy to that particular first classman and his friends.

After the presentation of diplomas the Corps marched to the front of barracks, where the old

first class adjutant read the name of his successor, and those other "makes" among the commissioned and non-commissioned officers, the Corps, meanwhile, standing at attention and giving no outward sign when a heart suddenly leapt with joy at the fulfilment of all its hopes, or another sank at the shattering of a year's ambition.

At last he reached the list of new corporals, and no one was surprised to hear Stirling's name read out first. Then came the others, among them little Lampton and Mann and Bradley, the list ending with Raymond's name, John Breckinridge Raymond.

For a moment Mizzoo doubted his own ears. He felt there had been some mistake, that the cadet adjutant was speaking of Raymond of the present first class, that perhaps he had been made a cadet lieutenant, and in some way his name had been misplaced among the corporals. But, no, that was impossible, and then, besides, the adjutant had said Raymond J. B., not Raymond R. S.

Even Stirling, who perhaps realized better than any one in the class Raymond's real worth, was surprised. Not that the Missourian didn't deserve the honour, but that nobody even for a

moment had considered him available for the position, as Raymond simply went ahead and did his duty without any thought of "boning chevrons," standing erect because he had learned to do so in plebe camp, and going through every military formation without the least enthusiasm, this being replaced by a machine-like uniformity that in the end had counted over more ambitious soldiers.

Riggs once said of Raymond that he did his duty as naturally as he brushed his teeth, and as he had fought his way up inch by inch in class standing, so he had attained the crowning glory of yearling camp, a corporal's chevrons, and with no more idea of such a reward than of being made Superintendent, and this notwithstanding half the class had been striving for them ever since their admission to the Academy.

If the new corporal had not been in the rear rank some one would have seen the shiver of incredulous delight that shook him from head to foot, though in a moment he had gained control of himself, the boyish shoulders, so much broader and straighter than they had been a year before, squaring themselves more resolutely under the same will power that checked the trembling

of his lips and the sudden suffusion of his eyes.

Even Jack Stirling, for all his popularity, did not come in for the same enthusiasm that greeted Raymond the moment ranks broke. For Jack's appointment had been a foregone conclusion from "beast barracks," while Raymond was one of the last to leave the awkward squad and, with poor old Bayard, had been the despair of the cadet instructor. Now, that young martinet was one of the first to rush up with congratulations, slapping Raymond on the back and punching him in the ribs as if they had been old friends, though only yesterday, Raymond had been calling the new sergeant major, "Mr. Graham, sir!"

Such a hilarious, jubilant, side-splitting time as they made of those few minutes before the drum in the sallyport called them to dinner. Such slapping of shoulders, and flinging up of caps; such sportive pugilism; such buffoonery, banter, and badinage as the new chevrons were pinned on; such skylarking and monkey tricks. Now they tore around the area with a newly made corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, or captain held aloft on sturdy shoulders; now threatened to "drag" them the first wet night in camp. When

the furloughmen and graduates in their brand-new " cits " appeared at door or window, they were greeted by a cross-fire of wit and ridicule, madcap wearers of the motley being quite in their element, though their smart sayings and flashes of wit were no better received than were the more obvious jokes of quieter men.

If any ambitions had been shattered by the reading out of the new officers and non-commissioned officers in the battalion of cadets, no one looking down upon the area in its holiday excitement would have realized it, for the third class of yesteryear were arm in arm with the third class of to-day; and the stern drill master of the previous summer clumsily hugged the new corporal, who after this, unless the second classman happened to be a " non-com " himself, would rank him at all military formations; while the first class officers were delirious with a joy that carried with it the responsibility of succeeding such splendid men as Faulkner, Jim Little, and Dude Fitch.

Perhaps no " make " was more joyfully hailed by the Corps than was that of Graham as sergeant major; and soon the whole new yearling class was howling " Hurrah for Graham! Hurrah for

Graham!" quiet old Bayard's voice leading the rest.

From an area room in barracks, Faulkner watched it all with a queer pain tugging at his heart. Up to that moment he had hardly realized it was he who was to graduate, his long connection with the Academy and its round of duties making him feel that he was a fixture there. Unconsciously he had always cast his thoughts of graduation in the third person, and in his enumeration of the days to June had joyfully hailed the passing ones, looking forward to the hour of his graduation as the supreme one of his life, for if any course in the country makes the graduate deserve his diploma, it is the one at West Point. There is no dodging of examinations there; no cramming for them, nor cheating through them. Neither is their favouritism shown, the diploma being a certificate of good, hard, honest work faithfully performed. Add to this the strain that four years of such discipline and endless drilling imposes, and it is small wonder that no days are so joyfully hailed in passing as the hundred days to graduation.

And yet as Faulkner stood there, the diploma he had received from the President safely packed

in his trunk, the four years well behind him, a mist of tears blotted out the old area of barracks and he turned away from it blindly, mechanically buttoning up the civilian sack suit that was intended to be worn open. He had not dreamed it would be so hard to leave it all. He had not realized he cared so much.

On the stairs he met Jack and Raymond in search of him, their faces alight with pride in the new chevrons. Faulkner held out a hand to each.

"I'm so proud of you both," he said with a smile that challenged them from his eyes before it advanced from his lips, "and I'm sure you'll wear the chevrons to the end." He reached into a pocket and drew forth the insignia of a cadet captain, one chevron apiece, which with a little laugh he presented to his young admirers.

"For luck," he said shortly, and then with an odd little catch in his voice: "You'll find the shoulder straps weigh more than chevrons. I'm almost sorry to give these up."

Jack who loved everything about the Academy returned Faulkner's look with understanding eyes; but Raymond wondered that an officer, who had drawn one of the finest cavalry regiments

in the service, could ever regret giving up West Point gray for Army blue.

He said something of the kind, but Faulkner only smiled a little sadly:

"I was just like you, Raymond, my dreams ever full of graduation, and speeding the hour that would witness my release from the Academy; but Stirling, here, lives in the present and gets the best out of it. You'll understand one of these days what I mean, Raymond, and be as homesick for the Academy as you were for Missouri this time last year."

Just then came a shout from the area.

"Faulkner! Faulkner! Faulkner!" and a half dozen husky fellows tore up the iron stairs of barracks.

They were mostly of the new first class, and Faulkner stood waiting for them, a smile on his face as he recognized his special dutyman of four years ago, and another high ranking lieutenant who had been one of the most obstreperous plebes in that summer's camp, and a sworn foe to Faulkner and all Faulkner's friends.

Now, flushed with anything but animosity, he swung the big graduate off his feet, and between them the six managed to get him down the stairs.

Arrived in the area, they were immediately surrounded by a howling mob of cadets, both in uniform and civilian clothes, and if "Assembly" had not sounded at that identical moment it is not impossible but that Faulkner would have been torn limb from limb in the wild enthusiasm at his appearance; for never had a man graduated from the Academy leaving behind him a more enviable record than did Faulkner of Missouri.

At the first roll of the drum, more than half of the furloughmen and graduates started to fall in line. Then, remembering, they stopped short, while the first and third class stepped into ranks. A moment later, commanded by the new first captain, handsome Billy Bancroft, straight and slim as the barrel of a rifle, the battalion, looking strangely attenuated, marched to the Mess Hall, the plebes of yesterday scarce realizing that the much longed-for yearling camp was at hand.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Camp life began with a week of steady drizzle, and chilly weather at that. This made miserable, shivering formations of all drills and parades, and as there was no place in camp to dry anything, the young men were compelled to sit around all day in their wet clothes, and if they were on guard, sleep in them at night. But for all that few colds were contracted, and the general health of the Corps was better than it had been in barracks, out-of-door life and plenty of exercise agreeing with every one.

Among the three cadet corporals retained in barracks to look after the welfare of the plebes was Jack Stirling, and on the morning the newcomers reported he had his hands more than full, and felt the same surprise at their "grossness" and lack of military knowledge that he had experienced the year before on first meeting some of his own classmates.

Now he realized that many of the most awkward

candidates, and those who had come to West Point simply for the educational advantages, might develop into the best soldiers before the year was over, while even those who had been brought up to look on the army in times of peace as a drag on the country, a wolf gnawing at her very vitals, or a serpent coiled to spring, would learn what the service means to the welfare of the nation, the defence of the government, and the protection of the people's rights and liberties.

Like all yearlings, however,the three corporals in charge decided at the end of the first day that never had such a "gross" lot of men reported at the Military Academy. As in their own class, the candidates were from all grades of society, and many of them showed by their manner that they looked on the upper classmen as pompous satraps, absolutely ignorant of the political situations of the day, or the great things the country was striving for; and so tied up in their own red tape as to be incapable of human sensibilities, their ears deaf to anything but drum beats and bugle calls, their eyes blind to all but the glitter of gold lace and brass buttons.

There was one military exception, however, to the most unmilitary rule of those reporting,

and he appeared on the scene almost at the close of a long day when the first class officers, their nerves worn to a frazzle by dealing with concrete stupidity in the raw, had left the ranking corporal in charge. For, the opinion of candidates to the contrary, knocking a plebe class into shape is not the most exhilarating experience of the West Point course.

When the "exception" reported at the inquisitorial chamber in the eighth division, his coat buttoned up smartly, his head erect, his eyes straight to the front, his little fingers on the seams of his trousers as became one in the attitude of attention, and all this after having complied with every instruction on the printed slip outside the door; not a cadet there but drew an inaudible sigh of relief, a relief which grew as the "exception" answered all questions briefly, promptly, and respectfully.

Well set-up, with a fine carriage of the head and shoulders, the youngster presented a splendid appearance, despite his small stature, and Stirling, wearied from examining much of the raw material that had presented itself, looked approvingly on this dapper little candidate and asked his name.

What seemed to be a smile twinkled for a mo-

ment in the candidate's blue eyes, but was gone so quickly that no one had an opportunity to request him to "wipe it off," though the swift colour that mounted to the roots of his fair hair grew deeper as, bracing still more, he answered in deep chest tones:

"Timothy O'Brien McCarthy Croghan, sir!"

The acting first sergeant fell back a pace or two at this strictly Hibernian collection of names, and for all his training could not conceal the delight that shone from his face and trembled in his voice.

"Are you — do you mean to say — is it possible you're my old friend, Tim Croghan?" he began, and then, not waiting for an answer unless the deepening colour on the other's face and his sheepish grin could be called one, he held out both hands in greeting, utterly regardless of the scandalized faces on every side.

"And to think we haven't met before in nearly ten years," he cried, "and that you should have known me at once, while I didn't dream it was you until you gave your name. How did you ever happen to remember me, Tim? What's that? Sergeant Donnelly had shown you my picture, and you knew I was one of the cadets in charge of

candidates? Why of course, and come to think of it, old fellow, you haven't changed a great deal after all, or for the matter of that, grown much either," and as Stirling spoke the bare cadet room of the eighth division faded away and he seemed to see the little Tim Croghan of long ago in his sister's outgrown dress, and his father's campaign hat, solemnly marching up and down in front of the fort on the reservation, while the other boys ran off and left him to keep watch alone.

But Tim's voice answering a question Jack had asked, brought him back to the present with a start.

"I should have told you I hoped for an appointment this year," he was saying, "only your father and Sergeant Donnelly wanted to surprise you, sir, especially on hearing you were in charge of candidates. And then too, I really didn't know I'd get the appointment for I was only an alternate, but my principal failed and so here I am — sir — " he added the word with a little jerk as if in his joy at meeting Stirling he had almost forgotten it.

Jack laughed in sheer delight at seeing the boy again, his little friend Tim, the son of one of the finest old sergeants in the cavalry.

Also he knew that here was material for a cadet and gentleman, for unless Tim had changed much since the old days his was a personality as great as his stature was small.

But other candidates were waiting, so the friend of Tim's boyhood became for the moment his commanding officer, quiet and self-contained, asking questions very much to the point, and rather discouraging the other cadets' insatiable curiosity as to Croghan's antecedents, education, and "former condition of servitude." At last he dismissed him in charge of a dapper yearling corporal, who marched him to an area room in barracks, where, after a few preliminary instructions as to the correct deportment of a candidate, he left him to his own thoughts. Judging from Croghan's expression these must have been very pleasant, for the boy looked around the bare, cheerless room as if he loved it already, and his heart was full to bursting that he had made the first step on the long road which leads to a commission in the regular army.

That night Jack sent for Tim to come to his room and they talked till "tattoo," Croghan finally leaving the richer for several white belts, the traditional trousers which should have

fallen to his share being several inches too long.

The other corporals in barracks were somewhat scandalized by Jack's partiality for Croghan, and that night, after the candidate's departure, they inquired somewhat sarcastically if Jack wished Croghan to be exempt from hazing during his plebe camp.

Jack was properly indignant.

" Why, of course I don't! " he sputtered. " No one should escape the sort of hazing we give at West Point, except a man one wouldn't associate with, and I can't imagine a worse punishment than to be totally ignored in plebe camp." Then, half reflectively:

" Did any of you fellows ever see a strange horse put into a pasture with a lot of other horses? You have, Marr? And you too, Lampton? Well, you know then that even among animals those longest in the place will try to bluff it over the newcomers, just as in a school or college the older men put the younger ones through their paces. Now, this has been recognized at West Point and taken advantage of by the authorities, in that upper classmen are allowed to help train the plebes, and it does all good, — teaching the

older men authority and the newcomers obedience.

"As for little Tim Croghan, I'd venture to say that he'll take his instruction in good part, though I wouldn't advise any one to monkey with him when it comes to guard duty, Tim having strong views on that subject."

"He feels very much as you did last year, eh, Jack?" laughed Lampton slyly.

"Yes, and as I feel this year, too, for in my opinion the plebe sentinels should never be molested except to teach them the sacredness and responsibility of their work."

Two weeks later when Tim Croghan marched over to camp, in company with a hundred other plebes who had not hauled down their colours at the preliminary examinations, he found himself in B company, right across the street from little Riggs. This young gentleman promptly took him in hand, and the plebe fell a willing victim to the yearling's whimsicality, while in turn Riggs could not but admire Stirling's old friend, who proved himself as good-natured as he was willing and as ready for all the absurd mock formations in camp as for the serious work in drills.

There was the usual amount of hazing that summer, with the exception of not molesting plebes on guard — Stirling's views being accepted by the class — and there was the usual amount of trouble for the yearlings because of hazing, Doolittle of Kansas, for example, getting his furlough cut five days for walking cross-legged at battalion drill in order to trip a plebe in the rear rank; while Lampton was in arrest several weeks for putting fourth classmen through unauthorized military evolutions at the unauthorized hour of midnight, Old Grizzly being awakened by Lampton's gentle "Hep! Hep!" and the crunching of gravel under the feet of the luckless plebes.

Until the arrival of the fourth class in camp, guard duty was rather frequent for the upper classmen there, the companies being small by reason of the men on furlough and the departure of the graduates. Three times a week they were on guard from nine o'clock one morning until nine the next; and how slowly the time passed for them walking post, especially at night when, tired out, they could scarcely drag one foot after the other, the gun over their shoulders seeming to weigh tons instead of a few pounds, and bringing back vividly to each of them those nights on guard

during the previous summer when they were constantly on the lookout for mischievous yearlings ready to show them how to "quit" their post before being properly relieved, or "quit" their piece without explicit orders from some person authorized to give them.

How welcome was the voice of the sentinel from the guard-house each hour, proclaiming the time of night, this call being taken up successively by each sentinel in the numerical order of his post, and each ending up with the slightly prolonged, "A-l-l's Well!" while even more welcome was the reveille gun that proclaimed the long night was over.

Little had they realized in barracks, when dreaming of the glories of yearling camp, how hard it was going to be for them, and that instead of the easy time anticipated they would have their hands more than full, what with guard duty and the inevitable drills, while those in authority over plebes found the distinction of being selected for such work rather tempered by the tedious hours of correcting "grossness." For, strange as it would have seemed to the plebes, it was no easy task to put their awkward squads through the severe exercises and drills which made their

lives so miserable, and which a year before these same severe young drill masters had stumbled through as awkwardly as the awkwardest in their own ragged ranks.

But as the plebe of yesterday looked up to and reverenced, or, perhaps, disliked the yearling over him, so the present fourth class felt the influence of the third class and recognized their power to command, while the first classmen ranked in their eyes as only a little lower than the Superintendent or Commandant. This had a stimulating effect on all concerned and made camp for the two upper classes, even in the most trying circumstances, quite bearable because that peculiar element in human nature, love of power, was more than satisfied; the yearling finding it much more pleasant to command than be commanded, not to mention the greatly increased privileges accruing to his position and the delight of being accepted as a friend and equal by the first class.

Twice a week regularly hops were held in the Academic Building, and two other evenings were given over to band concerts at camp, where soft laughter and the rustling of pretty dresses brought the first tangible reminder to many a homesick yearling of the mother and sisters so far away,

for up to June there were few among them who had so much as spoken to a woman since entering the Academy the year before.

Often these girls and their chaperons were either friends or relatives of one or other of the two classes in camp, and they added the one touch of lightness to the soldier's somewhat restricted life though, after the monotonous existence of the previous year, the third classmen found their privileges many, what with rowing on the river in the big pontoon boats; swimming off a point about a mile and a half up the Hudson; strolls around Flirtation Walk; picnics at Fort Putnam; and long climbs to the top of Crow's Nest, all the points of interest off limits for a plebe being at their disposal, the previous deprivations but making the joys of liberty more keen.

By the middle of July target practice was in full swing, as were also artillery drills, while the dancing lessons twice a week were not despised as much as they had been the year before, now that the hop room was at their disposal with all its attendant joys.

Early in August the battery commander took the yearling class out three miles in the mountains for target practice with the field guns, and what

a good time they had riding there, for while the caissons and gun-carriages had no springs and the roads were rocky and rough, still it was a ride and they were off the old limits and amidst new and beautiful mountain scenery.

Arrived at the point selected they unlimbered, and soon had the shell and solid shot whizzing away at a target, which in the distance looked like a white speck on the mountain side. Some of the pieces shot with great accuracy, the shells seeming to explode right against the target, while one projectile caused some alarm by exploding at the mouth of the gun, though fortunately the flying pieces did no more damage than to cut off some tree limbs.

During the subsequent excitement several of the cannoneers, whose posts were not very hard to fill, slipped off and foraged an apple orchard, so that the way back to camp was beguiled by apples, green and ripe, which were hugely enjoyed, the officer in command being either very deaf or very lenient to the hubbub of good-natured chaff at his back.

Not long before reaching the post, monkey-brained Riggs, who as usual was the life of the party, came near being the death of it as well,

for on passing an old hornet's nest in the lower branches of a tree, he reached up idly with a stick and knocked it down, upon which the brave cannoneers dismounted and fled before the advancing host of the enemy, for the old nest had unfortunately not been empty, as many a swelling nose and eye testified for days to come. Josh Billings somewhere says that a well organized onslaught of hornets would break up a camp meeting, while the yearlings and first classmen on that memorable ride could testify that they had seen it break up a battery of artillery.

Returning to camp, Raymond found his tentmate, Jack Stirling, in a state of ecstasy bordering on delirium, for it seemed that in less than a week his mother was to visit him at West Point, bringing with her the wonderful baby brother and a girl from Maryland.

As Jack read the letter aloud to Raymond, not omitting any delicious detail pertaining to Samuel Donnelly, Jr., Riggs and Bayard stepped in to exhibit their hornet stings, and great was the festive Riggs' joy at the prospect of a new girl on the post. But that was the only rose leaf under Stirling's ten feather beds, and he grumbled not a little that as his mother was to be at West

Point only a fortnight, he should be obliged to have a strange girl on his hands at the same time.

Riggs turned a flip-flap to relieve his over-strained feelings.

" Just leave her to me," he chortled, and then with a sudden access of gloom: " That is, unless she's one of these Junoesque creatures like Miss Harding that makes a short fellow feel he's simply masquerading as a man."

Raymond laughed.

" Read what your mother says about her, Jack. I should think from the description she was just about Riggs' size."

Jack obediently unfolded the long, closely written letter, and tearing his eyes away from all the home news, he read aloud:

" I have about decided to take a girl with me to West Point, Jack. You know her well by reputation, of course, for she's that Miss Carroll Carr of Maryland who has been so much in the public eye since her brilliant *debut* last winter."

Jack looked up from the letter long enough to remark that if the girl were a Maryland Carroll

or Carr, she was pretty sure to be in the society columns from one year's end to the other, and then resuming:

"I met her as she was passing through Leavenworth last winter on her way to the Pacific Coast, and when I mentioned having a son at West Point, — and I find I mention it very frequently, Jack — she spoke up and said, 'Oh, Mrs. Stirling, if you should visit there next summer, wouldn't you let me tag along if only for a week?' Well, Jack, when a Dresden Shepherdess, modernized by Worth into the most bewitching creature you ever laid your eyes on, begs to be allowed to tag along, it's not for an old woman like me to refuse. So I said I should be delighted, and I'm sure you will be, too, for it's no mean honour to introduce a girl like Carroll Carr to your classmates. And, by the way, you might as well let it be generally understood in the Corps that, to paraphrase Mrs. Browning in 'Aurora Leigh,' her stockings are no bluer than her eyes!"

Riggs laughed appreciatively.

"What a clever way of saying she isn't any too bright!" And then he half-hummed, half-chanted

a song prevalent among his cronies just then, Riggs himself being responsible for the words:

" ' She isn't very clever, she isn't very wise,
But when a girl has dimples and bits of Heaven for eyes,
And hair like sunshine gleaming and voice both sweet and low,
A little bit of nothing is all she needs to know! '

" Anyway, I like your mother's description, Jack. What was it? A Dresden Shepherdess modernized by Worth? Of course that means she's little, doesn't it? For whoever heard of a Dresden Shepherdess towering over the head of a fellow like some of these girls up here this summer. I tell you it takes the pride out of a man to be always looking up at a girl, instead of down at her in the protecting way that makes you and Raymond and Bayard so deadly attractive to the 'femmes.' " At which they all laughed uproariously, the three boys being the " bachelors " of the class, Jack and Raymond, in spite of their chevrons, cutting hops shamefully, while poor Bayard had never scraped up courage to go, after his accident at the graduation ball.

Like wild-fire the news spread through camp that Stirling's mother was coming to West Point the following week, bringing with her a Miss Carr

of Maryland. *The* Miss Carr, Riggs said, and further described her as a belle and a beauty, whereupon Jack found her card for the hops very easy to make out, the haughty first classmen themselves condescending to ask for dances, and rather intimating that Stirling should give them precedence in the matter over his own class.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Even Bartholomew Bayard shared in the general anticipation though, poor, homesick boy, he was more anxious to see Jack's mother than Miss Carr, and on the afternoon of their expected arrival at the Point he walked past the Commandant's quarters, not once but thrice, in a vain effort to catch even a glimpse of Mrs. Stirling and the baby, rejoicing with Jack that they were to be with him for a whole fortnight and yet half envying him the while.

On his fourth approach to the big house Bayard's heart gave a sudden leap into his throat, for there in the doorway stood Jack's mother. She was a little woman, but carried herself so well that it gave her the appearance of being taller than she really was, while crisp gray hair made her rosy face even younger looking by contrast. Clinging to her skirt was a baby boy whom Bayard recognized instantly from his resemblance to Jack.

As the big third classman passed the house,

Samuel Donnelly, Jr., saluted in the way Donnelly Sr., had taught him, and held out two fat arms in Bayard's direction with a coaxing "Jack, Jack!" every big, gray-coated figure spelling Brother Jack to Sammy, Jr., brought up as he had been on Jack's cadet photographs.

In response to the little lady's amused smile, Bayard dragged off his cap and wished in his heart that he had courage enough to go up the steps and welcome Mrs. Stirling to the Point. But he kept doggedly on his way to the Library, trying to turn a deaf ear to the childish treble that still pleaded to his unresponsive back, an agony of homesickness sweeping over him at the pretty picture the two had made framed in the old-fashioned doorway.

How friendly Jack's mother had looked as she stood there with the curly-headed boy clinging to her skirts. How willing to welcome a classmate of her son's. How gracious and matronly and sweet, everything that an ideal mother should be. It was evident they were waiting for Jack to return from drill, as the little lady was both gloved and bonneted for a walk, while Sammy wore a stiffly starched bonnet that framed his angelic face like a millinery halo.

Over in camp the drums announced recall from drill, and Bayard could picture Jack tearing across the parade ground to join his mother and Sammy on a walk around Flirtation, or for a climb up to old Fort Putnam.

He felt suddenly very much alone in the world, for on every side with the first tap of the drum, gray-coated figures joined waiting mothers, sisters, or friends, and under parasols of all sorts and conditions couples strolled here and there until another drum should rattle off first call for parade, and put an end to their pleasant intercourse. Nearing the Library, Bayard turned again toward the Superintendent's, and could just make out the two figures still waiting there for Jack. He wondered what was keeping the boy, and remembering Sammy's pleading voice he started toward camp to hurry Jack up, half running that no time should be lost.

Reaching the visitors' seats he slowed down a bit, for there standing by the guard tent, his back towards Bayard, was Jack himself. Bayard started to call to him, then stopped short with astonishment, for by Jack's side was a girl, a slip of a girl barely reaching to his shoulder, a girl with flushed cheeks, a tiny tip-tilted nose,

and wonderful gray eyes shaded by the longest of black lashes. She had a brilliant little face that sparkled and glowed as she talked, and when she suddenly laughed aloud Bayard thought he had never heard anything half so merry, and smiled a bit himself in sudden sympathy.

Stirling, all devotion, was holding a fluffy parasol over the pretty girl's head, and she was directing him as to the proper angle at which it should be held, stopping several times to greet different third classmen who rushed up to speak to her before hurrying away on some previous engagement.

Bayard thought that in all his life he had never seen any one half so merry or so kind or so sweet. He knew at once that it must be the Miss Carr who had come to West Point with Jack's mother, and he was glad that Jack had insisted on putting his name down for a dance at the next hop. It seemed incredible now that he had contemplated " cutting " the hop by going to the hospital, that he might not have to take those two dances with Miss Carr, for never in his life had he seen any one in the least like her.

It was not only that she was prettier than any girl on the post, she was different, and every one

who came within the radius of her personality seemed influenced by it.

Well poised and confident in her own manner, she seemed to have the gift of imparting these qualities to others, and Bayard saw with surprise how even some of the quieter men of the class waxed eloquent under the friendliness of her smile. As he watched her talking now to this man, now to that, he longed to be one of the group and a strange new confidence in himself made his heart beat rapidly. For the first time in his life he had a belief in his own abilities, a feeling of power and courage, and was sure that in talking to this girl he could bring forth out of his treasures things new and old, like the Biblical householder instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven.

But here his conjectures were cut short by the appearance of little Lampton, who brushed by him almost rudely. Joining the group around Stirling and the girl, Lampton, who had evidently met Miss Carr earlier in the day, greeted her with his most studied bow. Then turning to Jack with a care-worn expression, he said in his languid way:

"Do you know, Stirling, old fellow, I've got my engagements most hopelessly tangled and

am not at all sure whether my walk with Miss Carr is from now till parade, or not until release from quarters this evening."

The girl and Jack exchanged an amused look which only Bayard intercepted, as the other men had taken themselves off one by one, on the unpopular's Lampton's arrival.

"Not being a Delphic Oracle," Jack had laughed, "I'm not at all sure about *your* walk, Lampton! I only know this is my walk with Miss Carr, and that I've found it hard to choose between such a very attractive mother and very attractive girl," and he blushed a little as he caught Miss Carr's eye.

The young woman laughed prettily, but lowered herself somewhat in Bayard's opinion by a half mocking speech to the effect that Stirling ought not to compare his mother with a girl barely out of her teens.

It was not so much what she said as the way she said it and, in spite of himself, Bayard winced at the tone, a sudden memory coming to him of Mrs. Stirling and little Sammy waiting on the Commandant's veranda while Jack piloted pretty Miss Carr around the post.

But Jack, oblivious alike of the girl's banter

and Bayard's secret resentment, was suggesting to Lampton that since he was mixed in his engagements anyway, he might as well take Jack's mother around Flirtation. It seems she was as keen to see it as any girl, for Jack's father had proposed to her there and she had been planning a pilgrimage to the spot for years.

The elegant Mr. Lampton wriggled uncomfortably, but Stirling, accustomed as he was to his mother's assured position at Western posts, and feeling only the honour he was conferring on Lampton by allowing him to escort her, went on cheerfully.

"And be sure to let her tell you the story of the bell button she wears as a watch charm, Lampton, and please ask to see father's picture as a first classman in the back of her watch, and above all things, show her Gee's Point. It was at Gee's Point she won her famous victory!"

The girl laughed lightly.

"What a disrespectful young man you are!" she said.

Bayard felt the tone a flippant one, but his indignation at Jack and Miss Carr was swallowed up in a greater rage at the elegant Lampton who, pleading multifarious duties as an excuse for not

escorting Jack's mother around Flirtation, took himself off, leaving Jack speechless with wrath and the girl quite as speechless with laughter.

" Oh, dear," she whispered wickedly when she could get her breath, " To think that your mother should have been inspected and condemned her very first day on the post! "

" Yes, and by such a little pipsqueak as that," thought Bayard wrathfully, and forgetting his agony of shyness he went toward Stirling and the girl and, cap in hand, bowed awkwardly.

" I couldn't help overhearing your talk with Lampton," he began, " and if you'll allow me, Jack, I should be pleased to escort your mother around Flirtation while you take your walk with Miss Carr."

The girl flashed an approving look in Bayard's direction and extended a slender gloved hand in greeting.

" Isn't this Mr. Bayard? " she asked, her gray eyes smiling so frankly into his that for a moment he forgot his disapproval of her.

" I knew you at once," she went on in an unconventional way, much as one nice boy might speak to another, " for I've seen the class pictures, and all morning it's been like greeting photographs suddenly come to life! "

Bayard blushed way down under his collar and moved uneasily from one foot to the other. He was alive to the necessity of taking Jack's mother around Flirtation, but he was also under the spell of a pair of gray eyes that grew steadily warmer as they read his honest face aright.

He felt he had been mistaken in the girl. She had not meant to be flippant at the expense of Mrs. Stirling. She had not intended to speak of her lightly. She was young and thoughtless. That was all. But even as Bayard made excuses for her in his heart she turned to Jack, still nursing his wrath at Lampton, and with a merry glance into his brooding face began:

"You silly boy to take things so to heart! Why, I, for one, don't blame Mr. Lampton a bit. If I were a corporal in yearling camp I'd draw the line myself at 'dragging' an old woman around that romantic walk with a whole post full of pretty girls to choose from."

"Old woman, indeed!" blazed Jack suddenly, but before he could continue, Bayard, white to the lips with indignation, cut in with a frigid:

"If you'll excuse me, Miss Carr, I'll go for Jack's mother at once. I noticed her waiting for some one at the Commandant's as I came along,

and — and I don't think there's a man in the class that wouldn't be proud to escort her anywhere in the world!" with which he turned on his heel, after sweeping them a bow to rival Lamptons' own.

For a moment there was silence, then Jack burst into sudden uncontrollable laughter, but the girl, flushing all over her pretty face, ran forward and laid a detaining hand on Bayard's arm.

"I know now why the class calls you Chevalier Bayard," she said softly, and the clear gray eyes reflected something nearer akin to admiration than Bayard had ever seen before in any eyes.

"The little lady on the Commandant's veranda is not Mrs. Stirling," the girl went on, "but only another guest of the Commandant's wife and I — I am not Miss Carr!"

Bayard stared at her incredulously. Not Miss Carr? Then who under the sun was she? Jack's sister? No, he didn't have a sister, and yet — and yet there was something singularly like Jack about her brow and eyes.

Suddenly he realized that this must be Jack's mother, and the absurdity of his mistake filled him with unavailing wrath at his own awkward blundering. Would he never, never learn better?

Would he always be the impulsive Chevalier Bayard of the class, the butt of all their jokes, a Don Quixote fighting a windmill?

But the slim little hand on his arm brought him back to the present with a start. What was Mrs. Stirling saying? That he had paid her a pretty compliment by mistaking her for a girl? That he had shown true chivalry towards that absent woman he had thought was being spoken of slightingly? That Jack's mother was proud to have him numbered among Jack's friends, and that she hoped she might count him one of her own friends as well?

It was intoxicating to the lonely boy, and as he held the little hand for one moment in his own he felt she knew his longings to better himself and the struggles he had undergone. Had she not said in all seriousness that now she realized why they called him the Chevalier Bayard of the class? And she wasn't joking either! She didn't even seem to know he had been called it in derision.

Again he looked into the sweet face raised to his, and this time he noticed there were faint lines around the gray eyes, while the brown-gold hair showed a sprinkling of silver in the high lights. Her colouring, too, was a shade less brilliant

than he had thought it from a distance, all of which appealed to Bayard more than her supposed youth could ever have appealed. He was glad she was not a girl, but a woman old enough to be his mother, older, it might be, than his own mother, who was already wrinkled, gray, and stooped from her hard life on the farm.

Of a sudden Bayard felt at ease. He seemed to forget the length of his arms and legs, and the awful fact that he still " gobbled " as he talked, and an hour later when they returned from their walk around Flirtation, Bayard was holding the fluffy parasol; not at the correct angle, to be sure, but still holding it, and Mrs. Stirling was laughing appreciatively at a story he was telling at his own expense, one of the numberless instances of his " grossness " that first summer in camp, and he told it with the air of a man sure of himself at last.

But Bayard was not the only classmate that fell a victim to Mrs. Stirling's undoubted charm, for within the fortnight the whole Corps was at her feet, the most blundering man in it surprising not only his friends but himself by the ease and fluency of his conversation when with her; while even little Lampton lost some of his superiority

in her presence, and actually forgot at times to hold himself in unnatural attitudes that his chevrons might show to the best advantage.

Seeking only the good in those around her, Jack's mother found no evil in any one, her very trust in people making them live up to it. With Robert Louis Stevenson she believed that we were not put in the world to make our neighbour good but to be good ourselves, our duty to the neighbour being to make him happy, if possible; and by hugging close her illusions as to people and things she accomplished more than did many a long-faced moralist with a " passion for interference with others." Moreover, she even succeeded in keeping on good terms with herself, quoting one of Sergeant Donnelly's favourite truisms to the effect that " If you ain't friends with yourself, how can you hope to be friends with anybody else? "

On one of their long walks together during that blissful fortnight, Jack unburdened his heart as to his bitter disappointment in young Winthrop, with all the little details that go to make up a boy's first glimpse of an idol's clay feet, and the agony he had suffered in standing by what he thought was right in the face of their friendship for each other.

Mrs. Stirling listened, in a sympathetic silence that meant more than words, until the last drop of bitterness had been spilled from the cup, that distrust he had unconsciously felt for every one since finding Winthrop false, that half-formed suspicion that perhaps others in the Corps were as unworthy of confidence.

Then, and only then, Mrs. Stirling spoke, leaning slightly on Jack's arm to emphasize her remarks:

"Do you know, son, I have found that a belief in people is something like giving in charity. One hates awfully to be taken in by an unscrupulous beggar, but, after all, it's better to give ten times where it isn't deserved than to have refused once where it should have been given."

They were climbing up to Fort Putnam at the time, but Jack stopped short in the dusty road and looked into his mother's eyes.

"You mean, it's better to be mistaken in the goodness of some one, than ever to misjudge a person worthy of confidence?" he asked softly.

Mrs. Stirling smiled.

"That's exactly it, for at least thinking a person is better than he is doesn't make him any worse,

dear, and — " her voice dropped lower on the thought — " it might help make him better!

" Take young Winthrop, for example. Do you think for one moment he was hurt by your trust in him? No, Jack, he was helped by it, and though for a time he may have played on what he was pleased to consider your credulity, at the last it brought him to a realization of what truth and honour and courage mean. Mark my words, Jack, we shall yet hear great things of Winthrop, and you will live to be proud of your misplaced confidence in him, for you must remember he need not have told you anything that awful day in barracks. A silence may be as lying as words, and you would never have been the wiser."

Jack's arm trembled a bit and his mother went on softly:

" I know you've suffered, boy, but think how much greater his regret has been at losing your belief in him. As he himself said, Jack, that day in barracks, he is no more liable to deceit now than is any one in the Corps, and while I recognize that in the circumstances he could not have remained here longer, still I think he needs your friendship more than he ever did, and that he has proved himself worthy of it, poor motherless boy! "

The last phrase brought a sudden lump to Jack's throat, and he pressed his mother's arm even closer to his side, though all he said was:

"I'll answer his last letter this evening, mother. I should have done it before, but someway I couldn't, and the longer I waited the harder it seemed to write."

Mrs. Stirling's eyes smiled up into Jack's.

"You'll feel better, boy, when the letter's posted," she said quietly.

CHAPTER TWENTY - TWO

MEANWHILE the Dresden Shepherdess had taken West Point by storm. Even in the memory of Professors' Row there had never been such a belle on the post as Miss Carr of Maryland, and quite contrary to West Point custom, she scorned the ready made hop cards and not only had to divide her dances and walks, but her concert nights as well; so that wherever one saw a group of gray coats gathered especially thick, it was safe to surmise that Miss Carroll Carr was the centre of attraction.

Every morning, accompanied by Marie Harding, who was also spending a few days at the Commandant's, Miss Carr fluttered over to camp in the Frenchiest of French frocks and the frilliest of parasols, her cheeks flushed with excitement, her wonderful blue eyes resting now on this man, now on that, but always with the half-frightened, childlike, appealing look that made them so charming, the dark sweeping lashes ready to

screen them from sight at any moment, the dark pencilled brows ever arched in a perpetual surprise above their unclouded depths.

She was so little and helpless, so deliciously stupid and confiding, so sure of the infallibility of any one wearing the West Point uniform, that before the first day was over she had almost the entire third class in subjection; for after twelve months of plebedom the yearlings found it delightful to be looked up to by any one, especially by the prettiest girl on the post.

With breathless attention Miss Carr listened to the more than twice-told tale of why molasses was called Sammy; and she knew as well as any cadet in the Corps that jellies and blanc-mange were always referred to as Felix in the Mess Hall, because of an oft repeated sermon by the Chaplain in which he spoke of the fact that "Felix trembled" before the righteousness of Paul. Moreover she accepted as serious titles the disrespectful abbreviations of "Supe" and "Com" and "Tac," always speaking of the officers thus quite openly and without shame. In her guileless way she intimated that the word "yearlings" made her think of calves, and then apologized for the inappropriateness of her remark with

such sweet contrition that even the hardest-hearted third classman could not have taken offence.

Every night at parade she squealed when the gun went off, and every morning at guard mounting protested that the cadet officers were rude to snatch the rifles away from the poor privates as they did, and further averred that if *she* had the choosing of colour sentinels she'd always pick out the handsomest men irrespective of whether their equipment was up to the mark or not.

Her first morning in camp she was properly horrified at how hard they all had to work, and opened her big eyes sympathetically when she finally understood that the cadets really had to live in those little tents all summer long whether it *rained* or not. And she thought it ridiculous that the authorities should make them drill in the warm weather, though she supposed on awfully hot days they were excused from doing anything. And she wondered how they ever managed to keep so spick and span without valets to dress them, though she had been told that each man had a plebe trained up to do such things for him.

And weren't the plebes good in their squad drills? And didn't the Corps look "cunning" walking to and from the Mess Hall, keeping such wonderful step — she didn't see how they'd ever learned to do it. Why, it was so even that sometimes when they marched by at parade, their white trousers and black shoes looked exactly like piano keys going up and down, especially if you watched them through your lashes — *so!*

On first meeting Riggs and hearing him addressed as B. J., she asked what the initials stood for, and Riggs, turning, looked at her sharply, but detecting no malice in the soft eyes raised to his he had answered mendaciously:

"B. J.? Why, Benjamin Joseph, of course — Biblical names, you know!" and Miss Carr believed him, thereafter addressing many perfumed, ill-spelled little notes to Mr. Benjamin Joseph Riggs, to that gentleman's huge disgust and the Corps' uproarious delight.

But Carroll Carr was gullible enough to please any right-minded yearling, and the amount of misinformation she assimilated during that fortnight was incredible. Rumour had it she even believed the old, old story, told by generations of cadets, that the huge cannon-ball resting on a

stump at Trophy Point had originally been a grape shot fired during Revolutionary times into a slender sapling, and that as the tree grew the shot waxed larger and larger until at last, a full grown cannon-ball, it split the tree in two. She had also been led to believe that there was a study in the course called the Calculus of Flirtation, written by the professor of Matrimonial Engineering, while from something Mr. Benjamin Joseph Riggs had said she was equally certain that a prodigious number of men were found deficient in dancing every year and dismissed from the Academy.

Naturally Mr. Riggs was the girl's especial cavalier from the start, and to his own great satisfaction he had made her believe that chevrons were worn in turn by each man in the class, and that until the week before he had been acting sergeant major just as Jack Stirling was doing now. Likewise he gave her to understand that he could easily have stood one in the class, but that out of friendship for those below him he had let himself go down, section by section, until at last he stood at the foot of the "Immortals," a living monument to the love he bore his fellows.

At which, according to this young Ananias,

Miss Carr declared that his sacrifice was "too sweet for anything," and that she hoped they'd appoint him a major-general the minute he graduated. In fact, if he liked, she'd speak to her uncle about it. He held some high position in Washington, she wasn't quite sure whether it was a member of the Cabinet, a Judge of the Supreme Bench, a Senator, or a Representative. But anyway it was a position that gave him a good deal of influence, and she would see that he used it to the advantage of a man who had immolated himself on the altar of friendship.

"I'll wager she didn't say 'immolated,'" one of the men put in at this point of Riggs' narrative. But it seems she had, explaining later that she had found the expression in a book she was reading, and while she wasn't quite sure what it meant, still it had such a nice sound that she was going to use it whenever she could.

Also it seems that on their many walks around Flirtation, Riggs had fallen into the habit of spouting French verbs to Miss Carr, telling her he was quoting love poems from Victor Hugo. And she had blushed and sighed in that adorable way of hers, pretending to understand what he

quoted, till little Riggs had all but expired from suppressed mirth.

"Mr. Riggs is *so* intellectual," she gushed to Raymond her last day on the Point, "and I dearly love an intellectual man, even though I'm nothing but a poor little society butterfly myself." Here the blue eyes appealed to Raymond's for a compliment, but the boy returned the look with one so honest and puzzled that in spite of herself Carroll Carr blushed.

"You don't like me, Mr. Raymond," she pouted.

"I don't understand you," he confessed. "I've been brought up with girls at home, five sisters and numberless cousins, to the third and fourth degree, but I've never met a girl in the least like you."

Again the self-possessed Miss Carroll blushed.

"That might be a compliment," she hazarded.

"It might be," returned Raymond gravely.

Miss Carroll had a slight lisp and now it was accentuated.

"Why don't you say right out that it isn't a compliment?" she stormed, and before Raymond could answer: "I know you think I'm an awful ignoramus. Mrs. Stirling has told me what clever

sisters you have — college graduates and all that — but you should realize that every woman can't be strong-minded and — and short-haired, Mr. Raymond."

The boy was studying her lovely face. He remembered that Jack had said she ought to be framed and hung on a wall, for when she opened her mouth the charm vanished. And yet she didn't look like a stupid girl to him for all her stupid ways. Often, indeed, her simplicity struck him as calculated, the height of sophistication, and more than once he had wondered if she were quite genuine in her ingenuousness. That baby stare, for example, was absurdly out of place in a girl of her age, and more than once he had seemed to catch a glint of mischief in the demurely lowered eyes, though when she raised them again they would be as childlike as ever.

Embarrassed by the continued silence, Miss Carr shook out a fluffy pink parasol and held it to screen her face from Raymond's level gaze.

"You stare so," she scolded. "It makes me feel that at any moment you'll start me off with a 'Hep, Hep,' the way you do those poor plebes at squad drill," and as she said it her cheeks were

pinker than even the rose-coloured lining would have warranted.

Moreover she ceased chattering for the rest of the walk, and poor Raymond mopped his brow after saying good bye to her a half hour later at the Commandant's gate, for from that time on it had taken a conversational derrick to drag up even monosyllabic remarks from the depths of her vast ignorance.

Behind the curtains of an upper window Mrs. Stirling and the Commandant's wife watched the girl as she slowly mounted the steps, her cheeks still flushed, her eyes shining.

"I can't believe she's really the Carroll Carr I've heard so much about," mused the Commandant's wife. "Even your letters describing her didn't half prepare me for such a beauty. She's the most exquisite bit of flesh and blood I ever saw."

"I know it," agreed Mrs. Stirling. "I've often told Carroll that it's really bad form to be so conspicuously good looking."

"And hasn't she taken well?" pursued the older woman.

Mrs. Stirling laughed.

"You wouldn't have thought so if you had

been at guard-mounting this morning. You see, I wanted Jack to show Carroll some little attention before she left, and so suggested that he have a bell button gilded for her.

" Well, he was so anxious to do right that he not only had it gilded, but engraved with her monogram and the date. I was delighted when he showed it to me, for it looked as if he were really waking up to his social duties at last. But, my dear, how do you suppose he presented it? By taking Carroll around Flirtation in the conventional manner? No, indeed! He jerked it out of the front of his coat before a group of young people at guard-mounting, with a careless:

" ' Oh, by the way, Miss Carr, mother thought you'd like some little souvenir of your visit to West Point, and *asked* me to give you this.' "

The Commandant's wife shook with silent laughter.

" Of course it's all my own fault," Mrs. Stirling accused herself, " for not having insisted on more dancing school when Jack was a little chap in Montana. But he was so keen for out-of-door sports that I hadn't the heart to coop him up every Saturday afternoon."

" Yet you wouldn't care to have him too much

the other way," suggested the Commandant's wife, "like little Lampton of his class, for example."

"No," admitted Mrs. Stirling reluctantly, "I shouldn't like him to pattern after Lampton, but I do wish he'd take the same intelligent interest in girls that he does — well, say in guns!" and Mrs. Stirling wrinkled up her nose in the most engaging way.

The Commandant's wife laughed in sudden sympathy.

"He seems to get along very well with Marie Harding, doesn't he?" she hazarded.

"Oh, Marie could get along with any one," declared Mrs. Stirling. "She's a good comrade with all the class, and is as direct in her methods as Jack himself."

That Miss Carroll's indirect methods were even more successful than Miss Harding's direct ones might have been seen that night at the band concert by the most casual observer, for the Baltimore belle had so many yearlings in attendance that most of the other girls had to content themselves with mere first classmen.

On their return to the Commandant's quarters, Mrs. Stirling turned to her hostess with a deprecating little laugh:

"Carroll's really too absurd," she began. "I ought to have stopped her in the beginning, but you saw how it was!"

The Commandant's wife shrugged her plump shoulders.

"Miss Carr doesn't throw her pebbles straight enough to hurt the frogs much," she returned enigmatically.

"And knowing her ought to be a liberal education for any yearling!" ventured Mrs. Stirling.

Just then the girls appeared in the doorway, and both women looked up approvingly at the picture they made; the one tall, slender, straight, with direct brown eyes and a high colour; the other made up of snow and sunshine, the faint tints of dawn, and the cloudless blue of noonday.

"Well, Carroll," asked Mrs. Stirling, watching the girl's animated face with an amused expression, "and how did you enjoy your last evening at West Point?"

"It couldn't have been lovelier," Miss Carr breathed ecstatically. "That big, round, red moon gave an almost theatrical touch to the whole scene."

Marie Harding smiled.

" Yes, it might almost have been a masquerade or a fancy dress ball," she said.

Miss Carr looked up at her companion quickly.

" Why — what do you mean? " she stammered, the rose in her cheeks flaming to damask.

" Oh, nothing," answered Miss Harding innocently, " except that with the theatrical looking moon, the band playing sentimental airs, the brass buttons, and the pretty gowns it reminded me somewhat of the proper setting for a masquerade."

Mrs. Stirling laughed outright.

" Marie has always been somewhat bookish in her tastes, Carroll," she said meaningly, at which the tint in Miss Carr's cheeks deepened still more, while Marie and the Commandant's wife broke into a peal of laughter as merry as Mrs. Stirling's own.

For a moment Miss Carr looked from one to the other, with childlike, questioning eyes. Then she, too, laughed though a bit unwillingly.

" How long have you known? " she gasped when she could get her breath.

" From the very first! " crowed Marie, whereat they laughed again, an explanation to the mystery being found in a letter received by Jack the next week, for after giving him the latest news as to her

own well-being and the baby's, Mrs. Stirling went on to say:

" Tell Teddy Riggs for me to treasure all those misspelled little notes from Carroll Carr, that young person's autograph having some value in the literary market, for since the tremendous success of her remarkable book ' The Gospel of Decadence ' — a book that is being translated into both French and German, and which I am free to confess is much too deep for me — she has become quite an international character.

" You remember, Jack, I told you in the letter announcing our coming that Miss Carr's name had been before the public very much since her *debut* last winter — meaning, naturally, her literary *debut*, for I supposed you had read of her triumphs, not remembering at the time that cadets have little or no opportunity to see more than the headlines of the daily papers.

" But as you may imagine, to a girl who has been led to believe by both her publishers and the press that her name was a household word on two continents, it was quite a shock to find no one here had so much as heard of her; except Teddy Riggs, who, I believe, at their first meeting

said something about her being a great belle in Baltimore, and that he had been told by you the papers were full of her goings and comings.

"At first she was scandalized by what she was pleased to consider the shocking illiteracy of the Corps. But after talking over the course with one or two of the professors she agreed that the literary side of it had to be somewhat neglected, considering the short space of time allowed for academic work; the training of soldiers not involving the study of dead languages or the polite literature of the day, however desirable such things might be in addition to the compulsory scientific and military work.

"But being a woman, she took her revenge by playing the rôle she did, and as she was always given *ingenue* parts in college by reason of her baby face, she had small trouble hoodwinking the class, though from the first she was afraid of John Raymond's keen, analytical mind. The rest of you, she says, were 'easy,' and I'm sure she enjoyed her little masquerade to the utmost, especially with Teddy Riggs, though she begs me to tell him that the next time he pretends to quote French love poems to a girl, he must be sure

she doesn't know the verbs rapidly spoken as well as he does."

Before drill that morning the Corps was notified as to the contents of Mrs. Stirling's letter, and for a week thereafter the old librarian found a certain heavy sociologic treatise in great demand among the cadets, little dreaming that it bore on its ponderous back the name signed to so many ill-spelled notes received that fortnight in camp.

But Riggs, while dumbfounded, was not cast down and straightway sent a little verse to Miss Carr, which he signed Benjamin Joseph Riggs. It read:

"She is a College maid and knows full well
Her 'ologies and 'isms. She can tell
Of pterodactyls, rhizopods, and such
Unchristian, creepy, palæozoic things;
The moons of Jupiter, and Saturn's rings —
And what she doesn't know is not worth much.
Her formulæ and coefficients dry,
Her chemical reactions, and her high
And psychologic microcosm wise,
Make me rejoice her clever head is gold,
Her clever lips are red, — when all is told
'Her stockings are not bluer than her eyes.'"

CHAPTER TWENTY - THREE

On the twenty-eighth of August the furloughmen returned to the Academy, coming up on the day boat together. According to the old custom, on arriving at the top of the hill they formed a line in front of the Chapel and Library, while the first and third classes gathered on the south side of camp, having put in permits beforehand to cross sentinel's post Number Six, to meet the returning furloughmen.

There was a moment of intense excitement. Then at a given signal the youngsters rushed for each other, meeting in the middle of the cavalry plain, the furloughmen in their civilian clothes, the first and third class in their natty uniforms, all shouting and howling in the good old fashion. Now they tossed their caps and hats in the air, now flung valises, suit cases, sticks and umbrellas on the ground; wrestling, tumbling, pounding and hugging each other like so many young cubs. In a breath questions were asked and answered, civilian get-ups were admired or laughed at, some

too pretentious hat was crushed in or one of ancient vintage pulled down over its owner's ears, and other jokes were perpetrated, allowable only between the best of friends.

After every one was thoroughly exhausted they all went over to camp, the furloughman to report their return and " jump " the plebes for the rest of the day, when they were not otherwise engaged in looking up various friends on the post, or in telling the first and third classes about their good times at home.

That night there was a hop in the Academic Building, second only in importance to the graduation hop, and the next morning camp broke to the tearful regret of the " summer girls," although, as a rule, the cadets were as glad to get back to barracks at the end of the season as they had been glad to leave it in the beginning.

All morning there was a great hubbub in the canvas city, men rushing back and forth, giving orders or obeying them, white trousers twinkling in and out of tent doors, while gray uniformed arms, both with and without chevrons, carried luggage of all kinds here, there, and everywhere, straggling across the cavalry plain like so many gray and white ants moving from one hill to another.

At ten o'clock the visitors' seats, and every available bit of space around them, were crowded with officers and their families, people staying at the hotel, pretty girls and staid chaperons, children and nurses, civilians from Highland Falls, and soldiers from the barracks, all waiting to see the breaking up of camp.

At last the call sounded:

> "Don't you hear the General say,
> 'Strike your tents and march away?'"

at which the cadets all sprang to the side of their respective tents, some holding the loosened tent ropes, others waiting to catch the tent pole as it fell.

Then came a breathless silence, followed by a sudden tap on the drum. Down fell the ropes. Another tap, and the tent itself collapsed, to be held in place around the upright pole. Still another, and the camp was a thing of the past, the ground where it had stood through the long, hot summer being covered by a sudden snow of canvas.

Then the band struck up an inspiring air and the Corps, headed by the Commandant himself, swung back to barracks in column of platoons.

To the intense delight of Jack and Raymond, they were allowed to choose quarters in the old familiar eighth division, and this time not one of the undesirable " plain rooms " that, with their northern exposure, are so cold in winter; but one from whose western window the hills heavily wooded with pine rose steeply, and where old Fort Putnam could be seen crumbling to ruins on the summit of one of them.

If Stirling's former room, with the glories of sunrise in view, had cultivated a sense of the beautiful, this western one developed a spirit of patriotism, looking out as it did on those hills so full of Revolutionary history, which reminded him daily of the stirring scenes that had been enacted there so short a time before.

Across the hall Tim Croghan and two classmates swept, dusted, and put their cheerless quarters in apple-pie order, grumbling a bit as through the open door they saw the pampered yearlings tacking up turkey-red curtains at alcoves, clothes-press, window, and gun-racks, the effect being really palatial when compared with the plebes' bare room.

That Tim Croghan was now in Jack's company was a source of great satisfaction both to himself

and to Stirling, though the fourth class, to a man, declared that Tim's gain of an inch in height during plebe camp was due to a bump on his head, the boy having knocked it regularly all summer with that end in view. However this may be, it was an undisputed fact that Croghan had not only gained ten pounds in weight since his entrance to the Academy, but that he had shot up an inch as well, so that he was now an exact five feet seven, which made him available either as a short man in the flank companies or a tall one in the centre. And when he once realized this, perhaps no one in the Corps made as much of his inches as did the erstwhile "Tiny Tim," who almost walked on tiptoe that he might live near his old friend in barracks.

To little Tim Croghan, Jack Stirling was the embodiment of all the military virtues and he longed to be like him in every particular. But for the matter of that, the whole plebe class admired Stirling with a fervour that bordered on adoration, for Jack was sociable by nature and rather inclined to accept people at a little more than their own estimate of themselves, while his room-mate being more acute in his perceptions, had fewer friends — and better ones — his instinct

for choosing the right sort of companions being little less than a sixth sense.

But perhaps Stirling's blind trust in people, coupled with his singleness of heart, accomplished more towards the general betterment of mankind than did Raymond's critical attitude. For, as Riggs once said, a fellow really felt obliged to live up to Stirling's opinion of him, and before he realized it, had become so pleased with himself in the rôle assigned him that he forgot his original part entirely.

Without in the least "boning" popularity, Jack Stirling attained it in spite of himself, his fearlessness and honesty being an inspiration to the plebes, his good comradeship a thing to strive for among the yearlings, while the upper classmen looked on him as one of the finest fellows in the Corps, and as sure of being made first captain or cadet adjutant his last year at West Point as that he was now the ranking corporal of the third class.

All through his plebe camp little Corghan had carried water for Riggs and Gronna, feeling it a privilege to act as special dutyman for the friends of Jack Stirling, so long as he could not serve Jack himself in that capacity. But now that

he was back in barracks, he meant to utilize every opportunity to wait on Dorothy in the same way, despite the fact that on leaving camp such duties were no longer required of plebes. For in the first ardour of his hero worship little Croyden longed to serve the corporal in whatever way he could.

So on the first morning of the Corps' return to barracks, when he chanced to see Dorothy's water bucket outside the door he gladly carried it, in addition to his own, down to the hydrant in the area and after filling the two, staggered up the long flight of stairs with them, intent only on how to accept Dorothy's profuse thanks with becoming modesty.

But to Croyden's surprise, Raymond, who was room orderly for the day, met him at the door with a look that suggested anything but gratitude, and in a voice half-hurt, half-angry he began:

"Put that bucket down instantly, Mr. Croyden, and don't you try brownnosing us again by carrying up our water. I tell you once for all that the Corps won't stand anything of the kind. You're a cadet and a gentleman, or now that plebe camp is over, and I don't want to hear of your ever doing such a despicable thing again as to try to curry favour with upper classmen —" But here Jack,

well lathered for his morning shave, interrupted with a curt:

"That's all right, Raymond. I know Mr. Croghan well enough to be sure he had no intention of carrying the water for 'bootlicking' purposes." And turning to him he went on in a lower tone: "But in the future, old fellow, remember that all such services came to an end with your plebe camp and squad drill. The last tap of the drum that brought your tent to the ground yesterday morning raised you from a plebe to a fourth classman, and you're no more expected to fetch and carry now than would be a gentleman of the first class."

Tim trembled a bit at Stirling's earnestness and, very red, started to explain his motive in carrying up the water, but Jack interrupted with a good-natured:

"Oh, I know exactly why you did it, Croghan, but if we hadn't been such old friends I might have misunderstood just as Mr. Raymond did." Then more kindly still: "And I'm sure we both appreciate the feeling that prompted you to wait on us, and — and if you have any trouble in this year's course just feel you can call on Mr. Raymond and me for help, not that either of us came out

so very high in anything last June, but at least we passed, and I'm sure we can help you do the same." And then to little Tim's undying joy, the grave, stern, dignified Raymond not only seconded Jack's hearty invitation, but added an apology for his haste in imputing unworthy motives to Mr. Croghan.

So Tim, proud and happy, returned to his room where he completed his toilet and " police " work, tearing down the stairs as " Assembly " sounded, and out to the area, where he tumbled into ranks, answering " Here! " to his name on the roll with a new vim, as became one who had put behind him plebe camp and all that it meant of irritating subordination, that caricature of discipline which, after all, helped make comprehensible to many the real discipline, the real subordination, which otherwise might have seemed arbitrary and artificial.

For the first time the true meaning of life at the Academy was brought home to Tim Croghan; for the first time he realized that it was not the boy soldiering of his old Montana days, but the beginning of his career as an officer in the army, and as the Corps marched to the Mess Hall his heart swelled within him at the thought

that he was an integral part of that splendid whole.

There is a well known saying at the Academy that yearling September is the hardest month in the whole course, and it must be admitted that both Raymond and Stirling found it more difficult than anything they had yet encountered in their cadet life.

" Reveille " sounded on the stroke of six, and at half after six they were expected to be in the Mess Hall for breakfast, with police work and sick call sandwiched between. From seven to a quarter of eight came guard-mounting, followed by the academic " grind " of the day. Four hours they spent in recitation, and as much again was allowed for studying which, considering the length and difficulty of the lessons, was not half enough. So they took to " running lights " after " Taps," " cutting " meals, and going without all but compulsory exercise to get even a fair idea of what was expected of them in the section room.

In topographical and map outline drawing, Stirling and Raymond did exceptionally well, and with Stirling to help him in French, Raymond found the plays and difficult selections of the year really interesting, and to his intense delight

gradually worked up to the fifth section therein. Even this section he soon ranked, as was seen on the bulletin board many a Saturday afternoon, so that in the event of any one transferring down, Raymond would inevitably have secured his scalp.

In like manner, the Missourian drew Stirling up to his own section in Mathematics, and at the end of a hard week's work the room-mates found themselves rewarded by good average grades. Nothing startling, perhaps, but still good enough to insure their holding their own as the class waded through formula upon formula in Analytical Geometry, and piled equation upon equation of curves, parabolas, hyperbolas, and ellipses, these depending upon equations that started way back in Algebra and rolled along through Geometry, Trigonometry, and Analytics. Every day the tide rose higher and higher, until those who had not grown strong in breasting the current found themselves swept off their feet, to be entirely submerged at the dreaded January examination.

At first Jack and Raymond did their work without enthusiasm, drudging at it night and day until, to their surprise, the drudgery changed to interest and they experienced the joy of wresting success from seeming failure. Fortunately, too,

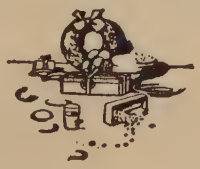
their instructor in Mathematics had all the requirements of a good teacher, realizing that education, like charity, means to show one how to help himself, how to increase his own resources, how to awaken initiative that the pupil may become self-active, rather than dependent upon others. He knew instinctively that each member of the section must work out his own mental problem, that individual effort meant the ultimate efficiency of the whole, for a good instructor is a John the Baptist preparing the way for one greater than himself, the pupil's awakened understanding of his own powers and faculties. This had always been the policy of the professor of Mathematics, and in Lieutenant Hamilton he found an able assistant who encouraged original thinking and quickened even the dullest men to unsuspected mental alertness.

French also proved efficient in sharpening their wits, while Drawing was a welcome relaxation from the more strenuous academic work and still more strenuous drills. Except for the dinner formation at twelve o'clock a claustral hush hung over cadet barracks from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon, broken only by the bugles calling sections to and from the Academic Build-

ing, its clear notes being followed by the measured tramp of feet on the area and low-voiced commands from this or that section marcher.

At a quarter past four the scholars were metamorphosed into soldiers, and despite the intense heat of early September they marched out to battalion drill, buttoned up to their chins in heavy dress-coats, for it was an unheard of privilege in those days to wear shell jackets for drilling, much less the sensible gray flannel shirt of the present time. Soldiers must be made to *feel* their uniforms, and the cadets were certain that if barbed wire collars could have been substituted for white ones the authorities would have been overjoyed.

For an hour and a half they drilled on the dusty plain, after which they had barely time to change wilted linen, polish their boots, and brush their coats before they were again in ranks for evening parade, the gray and white uniforms looking most attractive as the Corps swept across the greensward to the stirring music of the band.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

In those days the Kinsley apple orchard was off cadet limits, in consequence of which it was considered no mean achievement every fall to raid it, armed with pillow cases in which to carry back to barracks the miserable, wormy little apples that grew there; while now that it is on limits the apples wither and decay for want of any one to gather them.

It was Thomas Hughes, I think, who moralized on the question as to why a well brought up boy, who would not think of stealing apples from a green grocer's shop would unhesitatingly gather them from somebody's orchard, the ethical aspect of the case seeming to be entirely changed by the fact that in one instance the apples were growing on trees, and in the other were lying on somebody's counter. However that may be, every fall cadets were put in arrest for raiding the orchard, chevrons were lost, and tours walked, all for the sake of a handful of fruit barely worth the picking.

"I've no doubt the apple Eve gave Adam in

the Garden of Eden came originally from Kinsley's orchard," Riggs said one Saturday afternoon as he watched a number of classmates walking the area, " though how anybody could run the risk of getting extra tours or losing chevrons for such miserable, wormy trash is quite beyond me." Then the look came into his face that his friends had learned to know — and dread a little — a look of impish inspiration that boded trouble, as he went on:

" Now there's a tree in the Supe's front yard that's worth taking risks for, and this very night I purpose and intend to drag back some of the apples growing there for a midnight feast! " And sure enough, despite the protest of his friends, Riggs, the intrepid, walked boldly into the Superintendent's yard that night after inspection of quarters, stripping the royal apple tree without getting " hived " by even the bull-dog, a ferocious beast that seemed to regard cadets as his natural enemy.

Later a few congenial souls gathered in Riggs' room to enjoy the feast, and as usual wherever Riggs was, the noise waxed fast and furious, growing to such an uproar by midnight that the subdivision inspector howled out an expostulating,

" Stop that noise, you fellows on the third floor! "

For the space of at least ten minutes this warning was effectual. Then the noise broke out again, louder than ever, the shouts of laughter floating across the area to the guard-house where even the officer in charge, who was a very heavy sleeper, wakened, and jumping into his clothes, bounded up the stairs, three steps at a time. But fortunately he was also heavy on his feet, and Lampton's quick ear heard him coming in time to gather the uneaten apples into a pillow-slip and lower them by a cord from the window, while other men attended to the lights, and saw that no tell-tale evidences of the feast remained around the room.

Those who lived in adjoining quarters slipped into them quietly, but there was no escape for Lampton and Doolittle, who belonged in the eighth division, nor in that bare room was there any place of concealment. Suddenly Lampton solved the problem by slipping into his overcoat, turning the cape up around his head, and hanging by his hands from a convenient hook in the alcove, thus converting himself for the time being into a cadet overcoat and pair of trousers, for in the dim light of the bull's-eye lantern the protruding feet would

remain unnoticed. In a moment Doolittle had followed Lampton's example, and being smaller he looked even more like an overcoat than did the originator of the scheme.

It was all done so quickly that before the tactical officer reached the door everything was in order, and the two occupants of the room were in bed, shoes and all, the covers drawn up close around them, while in the alcove two gray overcoats hung close together, their wearers shaking with laughter at the rather obvious snores which greeted the sudden flash of the dark lantern in Riggs' face.

Satisfied that this room at least was safe, the unpopular Adonis continued his inspection of that division, and on his speedy return to the guardhouse, the four men remaining, of the ten who had gathered for the feast, crept softly across the board floor, which in spite of their care creaked harshly under them.

A moment later Lampton proceeded to pull the pillow-case with its precious burden back into the room. As he did this his face took on a puzzled look, which in a moment melted to a sheepish grin, for the case was empty save for a pencilled note which he read aloud:

"DEAR RIGGS AND GRONNA: — If Adonis hives you, you'll have no appetite for apples, and if he doesn't hive you, the escape will be so narrow that you'll be more than willing to share the fruit with your friends on the floor below."

And sad to relate, this remarkable effusion was signed by some first classmen whose names were the synonym for dignity and chivalry throughout the Corps.

As riding was to begin in a week or so, the second classmen, following a long established custom, tried to frighten the yearlings by making them think they would barely escape with their lives in the Riding Hall, though the second classmen themselves were so out of practice that it was almost as hard for them as for the yearlings and fully as conducive to lameness.

But the warnings of the older men struck terror to the hearts of yearlings, unaccustomed to horses, so that the very act of trying on their riding breeches and jackets filled them with awe, the "Tac" who inspected them seeming like an officer of the Inquisition fitting them to their grave clothes.

"I'm not a bit afraid of being hurt," Raymond

said somewhat regretfully to his room-mate on first inspecting his togs, "but I do so hate to get up there and make a show of myself."

Jack swept his friend with the eyes of a cavalryman.

"You'll be one of the best riders in the class," he returned shortly, "for you've got the long legs and the wiry, strong body that will give you the firm seat necessary almost from the start. And as for the rest of it — well, Donnelly used to say that a good trooper ought to be as strong in character as in muscle, for a horse knows when he has to deal with a rider that has the perseverance, pluck, and patience to control him. In fact, for all your inexperience, I give you just six weeks to be head over heels in love with riding, Mizzoo."

"Head over heels on the tan bark, you mean," laughed Raymond, and then impulsively: "Oh, Jack, if I ever can learn to ride I mean to take cavalry on graduation, for little as I know of army life, it still seems to me the only branch of the service worth striving for."

Jack was silent a moment, and when he spoke his voice had an odd little ring to it.

"I always thought that myself, Raymond, until this summer. You remember I talked it

a lot last year, even going so far as to state that I wouldn't accept any other branch? "

Raymond nodded.

" Well, in yearling camp I confided something of the kind to mother, and she replied by saying that father wants me to try for the engineers or artillery, and that if on graduating high enough for either of those branches I still want cavalry, well and good, but that at least he wants me to have my choice.

" Later in answer to a letter of mine on the subject, father wrote and said that in his opinion it was just as narrow for an army officer to arrogate all the good in the service to a certain branch, as it was un-American for a citizen of the United States to interest himself only in the North or the South or the East or the West; meaning, I suppose, that a good American doesn't confine himself to any one section or state, but works for the good of the *United States*."

Raymond looked up gravely.

" How West Point broadens a fellow in respect to his country," he mused. " Why, Jack, when I came here I was so southern in all my traditions that I actually resented rooming with a Yankee, and even thought the northern and eastern year-

lings were more surly and gruff in their manner than those from the South or West. Now some of my best friends in the Corps are real 'down easters,' and I see that a man isn't necessarily a good fellow because he happens to come from below the Mason and Dixon line."

"I suppose that's just what father means about the army," Jack answered, "and that an officer, whatever his branch, should work for the good of the service. He's delighted, too, that our rooming together has meant my standing so well in 'Math' this year, for if I only keep it up I may get a whack at artillery after all, especially as the scientific work next winter is along my lines of least resistance. Of course, up to the time I came to West Point, the cavalry meant army to me, as we'd never served with any other troops, and even yet I must confess to a great hankering for the crossed sabres, yellow stripes, and yellow plumes; but I shall do as father says, that is, try for the engineers or artillery and then make my choice."

"Well, I'd be willing to bet on the crossed sabres against the engineers' castle," laughed Raymond as he and Jack joined the other members of the Dialectic Society in an informal Saturday night meeting.

As usual this was more social in its nature than literary, though an outsider would have been surprised to see how well some of the men did with so little time for preparation; many a mathematical "goat," destined to be found deficient before the June of graduation, covering himself with a too ephemeral glory. For, as happened each year, the Dialectic Society was speedily offered up on the altar of necessity, the West Point of those days being farther from the world's doings than it is now.

Indeed, few men in the Corps had even time to read the daily papers, while the camps, the many drills, and the riding hall experiences replaced the athletics of other schools. But in spite of this lack of valorous intercollegiate rivalry, the life at West Point was not without interest, the very fight for standing in the section room having its romantic side, while no crack players on the modern football eleven or baseball nine are more looked up to than were the men wearing chevrons in those old days.

The next afternoon riding began, and the first half of the class, a bit self-conscious in their new clothes, marched down to the Riding Hall, the galleries of which were already filled with

interested spectators, who watched the men standing in line and tried to deduce from their expressions which were used to riding and which were not.

Little Lampton was most impatient to begin, and so self-confident that he had no qualms whatsoever, deceiving even the instructor by his swaggering manner.

"It's only a question of sticking on," he informed Raymond in a whispered aside. "There's not a bit of skill required!" But a moment later the horse he had mounted put his head down and his heels up, whereupon the over confident Lampton, to his own great surprise, was precipitated on the tan bark.

He was sure the trouble was all with the horse, and proceeded to inform the instructor of this interesting fact, but he was soon silenced and performed the rest of the ride clinging perilously to the horse's mane whenever the instructor turned his eyes the other way.

As for Raymond, he took his riding as hard as he took everything else, but stuck to his mount with characteristic calmness though every jolt threatened to unseat him. Just ahead of Raymond rode the boy from Kalamazoo, vainly

striving to hold his fiery steed in check by thunderous "whoas" that called down upon him the scornful wrath of the trim young instructor.

By the irony of fate, Jack Stirling, who had been used to horses from childhood up, drew the first steed of the lot and sat it in a way to make the discouraged instructor draw a breath of relief. Here, at least, was no tyro, and soon Jack found himself at the head of the long line, his horse prancing and curvetting as if he, too, realized that he was carrying a rider worthy of the best horse in stables.

As trotting seemed to be the normal gait even at the first lesson, most of the yearlings spent as much time in the air and on the tan bark as they did astride their respective horses, but as they rode with a blanket only, there was no danger of dragging from stirrups, while the tan bark was soft enough to prevent any greater casualty than stiff muscles or a general soreness of frame, due as much to the rough riding as to the tumbles. At every lesson the galleries of the Riding Hall were filled, and frequent bursts of laughter would greet some awkward tumble. Occasionally a youngster, losing control of his horse and getting frightened, would clutch at the

poor beast's mane, or, grabbing at his neck, go flying round and round the hall followed by the delighted shouts of the crowds in the gallery.

Strange to say, mounting and dismounting at a gallop, hard as it seems to an onlooker, was soon mastered by the class, and few among the yearlings but learned to like riding in spite of the hard work it entailed, and the occasional misfortune of getting some razor-backed vicious animal. In a very few lessons tumbles were the exception and not the rule, while even the most awkward yearling soon attained a surprising degree of efficiency in handling his horse, Raymond, in particular, being a star performer to Jack's ill-concealed delight.

In December, hurdle jumping added an intoxicating element of danger to the rides, and as the tan bark in the hall froze and became dry it covered the men with a fine dust that made them almost unrecognizable at the end of the hour. About this time saddles and curb bits made the mounting and dismounting at a gallop more difficult, and in addition the yearlings had learned to pick up their caps and gloves from the ground when going at full speed, all of which made the rides seem very reckless to an onlooker.

CHAPTER TWENTY - FIVE

Up to the middle of December dress parade was happening with distressing regularity, increasing the cadets' chances for demerits and taking a half hour's freedom from them daily, but at last the long expected snow came, covering the ground three inches deep with a good prospect for more.

Such a shout as went up from barracks as the first snow of the season fell, but when a brilliantly clear night succeeded the stormy afternoon, and the sound of sleigh bells and merry laughter floated back on the crisp air, it seemed to bring their monotonous existence into anything but pleasant relief. For with the coming of winter West Point was as dull as could possibly be imagined, with nothing whatever to distract the cadets from one Saturday night to another.

Having so little interruption one would imagine that the average man ought to have stood very well in his work, but the weekly marks did not indicate any great amount of progress for most

of the class, and it must be confessed that never in the history of West Point did the Corps have such a shaking up as at that January examination. Two second classmen were found deficient, and twenty of the third class, a most unprecedented occurrence, while as usual the plebes were heavy losers, thirty out of a class of a hundred being discharged.

Of the yearlings, four were given turnbacks to the plebe class, a bitter alternative to leaving the Academy altogether with failure writ large upon one, meaning as it did the postponement of furlough and graduation a whole year, beside the mortification of dropping back into plebedom again, and into the old humdrum of the same studies, not to mention giving up the class fellowship so dear to the heart of every cadet. Altogether it was equivalent to losing a year of life, said the turnbacks, but in every instance they accepted their fate gratefully, rejoicing that they were given yet another chance to prove their worthiness to wear the West Point gray.

As three of the turnbacks were corporals, the third class privates began "boning" the lost chevrons, the smallest part of the glory conferred by those strips of gold braid being the wearer's

exemption from sentinel duty and extra tours, for to all beholders they meant that the men wearing them were entitled to command, and in most instances that they had won this distinction by sheer force of character.

Among the turnbacks to the fourth class was little Lampton, the brilliant scholar of the winter before when all had been a review for him, the strutting corporal of yearling camp, a corporal who would have been the last man in the class to recognize that he really owed his chevrons to the good fortune of having roomed with methodical old Raymond the previous year, as otherwise his lack of neatness and military precision would have cost him unnumbered demerits his week on as room orderly.

Back in the fourth class again, Lampton went to the first section in everything, a somewhat chastened Lampton with a little less belief in his own abilities and a dull wonder at the mental exploits of plodding old Mizzoo, who had so far outdistanced him that second year at the Academy. Also Lampton had the poor satisfaction of hearing the despised Bayard of the year before answer to the name of Corporal Bayard at roll call, and saw him trotting around with conspicuously

bright chevrons on his sleeve, chevrons which in the natural order of things should merge themselves into the stripes of a sergeant next June, and which by rights should have been Lampton's, except for what he was pleased to characterize as the unjust discrimination of the Academic Board.

Examinations over, the inevitable Saturday night "sworrys" in barracks were resumed. These were not of the "biled mutton" variety so dear to the heart of Sam Weller, as refreshments were necessarily restricted to such things as could be cooked over a gas jet in quarters, but delightful "sworrys" nevertheless, Riggs and Gronna achieving fame over their culinary exploits.

There were Saturday night concerts, too, occasional lectures in the Mess Hall or Library, occasional hops in the Academic Building, and many informal dinners with garrison friends, the professors and their wives entertaining those among the cadets whom they came to know personally, as did the different married instructors, so that Saturday night passed very pleasantly for the yearlings, forming a marked contrast to the dull week-ends of the previous winter.

Among those who entertained frequently was

Mizzoo's Ogre, and strange to say the gruff, taciturn quartermaster proved the jolliest sort of host, though often after inviting his guests he would be called to New York on important business; whereupon a brief note informed the young gentlemen that Major Cramer's quarters were at their disposition during his enforced absence and that he hoped they would make themselves quite at home there.

This the young gentlemen always proceeded to do with great enthusiasm, and as the Ogre had a most estimable Chinese cook, who also acted in the capacity of butler, they straightway loosened their tight dress-coats the better to enjoy themselves, and after dinner gathered around the Ogre's piano to sing themselves hoarse, quite unconscious that Ah Lee watched them admiringly the while through a chink in the pantry door, and all week went about his work humming snatches of "For he's a jolly good fellow," to the Ogre's vast amusement.

The Commandant also entertained Jack and his particular cronies very often that winter, and once a month a batch of yearlings dined in state — and alphabetical order — at the Superintendent's. It was always a gloomy dinner,

the guests feeling somewhat like "undertakers hired to mourn over the — birds in the dishes," and once outside the gate, after shaking the great man's limp hand at departure, they would invariably run a race back to barracks simply to get thawed out.

One Saturday evening late in February, when Stirling and Raymond were giving an unusually gay chafing dish supper to those of their cronies who were not attending the hop in the Academic Building, Connelly of the second class burst in at the door, a crumpled newspaper in his hand, his eyes bright with excitement.

"I say," he began impetuously, "have you fellows heard about Tom Winthrop?"

Jack paled. What had happened to Tom? Was he ill? Had he been injured? Was he dying? Was he *dead?* Or, more dreadful still, had the old lack of honour cropped out again and made him do something disreputable?

Jack put the thought aside fiercely. No, no, that couldn't be. And yet why didn't Connelly go on and say what had happened? Why was he keeping them all in suspense?

Jack stirred impatiently and tried to speak, but the words stuck in his throat, and of a sudden

his heart went to beating so loudly that he felt the others must hear it, too.

Then from what seemed an immeasurable distance somebody spoke:

"Well, what's Tom been doing, Connelly?"

"Oh, nothing much," returned the other with great impressiveness as he shook out the paper he held in his hand, "only West Point training is in the lime-light now, all owing to Thomas W. Winthrop. Then, too, I wanted your opinion on this as a work of art!"

At the rustling of the paper Jack glanced up, and there was Tom looking at him gravely from the first page of an evening journal noted for its yellowness. The picture was smeared with printer's ink, but still recognizable, and in large letters under it Jack's startled eyes made out these words:

"SON OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
SAVES AN UNKNOWN BEGGAR
ON BROADWAY
PLUCKY ACT ALMOST COSTS HIS LIFE"

Jack rubbed his eyes with a shaking hand and looked again. The mist suddenly cleared away. His friend Tom had done nothing disgraceful.

He had been splendidly brave — courageous . . . . The men were all praising him, even Riggs and Gronna. Ah, if Tom could only hear them . . . .

But what else did the paper say? He remembered now. The plucky act had almost cost Tom's life. With a great effort Stirling spoke:

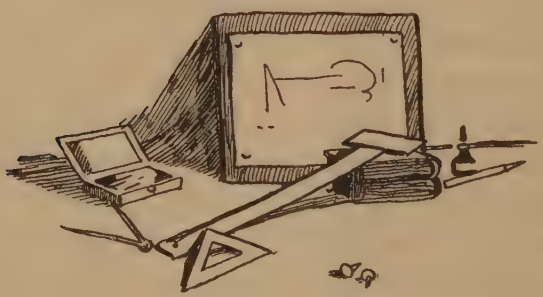
"Is — is Winthrop badly hurt?" he faltered.

"Hurt enough to be laid up in the hospital," returned Connelly, swelling with importance at the reception of his news. "It seems he saw a beggar in danger from a runaway horse attached to a hansom cab, and though he managed to get the beggar — a feeble old woman — out of the way just in time, the horse knocked him down and trampled on him. The paper says it was the nerviest sort of rescue and that several men, who were nearer to the scene of the accident than young Winthrop and yet did nothing to save the woman, were hissed by the crowd that collected to see poor Tom carried off in the ambulance. They say when he opened his eyes after the operation, that he mumbled something or other about 'honour;' but he went nutty again and they don't know whether he'll pull through or not!"

With an inarticulate cry Jack snatched the paper out of Connelly's hand. Again Tom's

brave eyes looked straight into his just as they had looked that awful day when he finally agreed to leave the Academy. It was a cadet picture, taken the spring before, and the sight of the uniform brought another lump to Jack's throat. Connelly said Tom had mumbled something about honour in his delirium — dear old Tom — dear old Tom —

Jack looked up with swimming eyes to meet Raymond's quivering attempt at consolation. Then they both broke down, but fortunately the other men had left the room.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

By "Tattoo" the news had spread through barracks that Tom Winthrop, at the risk of his own life, had dragged a beggar from under the very feet of a runaway horse on Broadway; and as the morning papers announced that his recovery was only a matter of time the class breathed again.

A nice fellow, Winthrop! A little obstreperous during the first six months at the Academy, perhaps, but still a nice fellow. That affair in plebe camp? Well, Faulkner might have been mistaken, you know! In fact he must have been, for Winthrop was cleared at the subsequent court-martial and then, too, hadn't Jack Stirling stood by him from the beginning? And every one knew that Stirling wouldn't have countenanced anything of the kind for a moment.

But what about Riggs and Gronna? Stubborn, that was all. Government mules were yielding creatures compared with them! And anyway, what was their influence pitted against that of

men like Stirling, Raymond, sober old Bayard, and a score of others?

No, there was not the slightest possible doubt but that Tom Winthrop had been horribly misjudged, and the only way to make up for it in the slightest degree was to ask him to the furlough dinner in New York. So in due time Tom, swathed in bandages, read the letter signed by all but two of the class, and weak as he was the tears welled up in his eyes and come near rolling down his thin cheeks.

How grateful he felt that they should have remembered him, and how he longed to see them all again. At first he felt he could not accept their hospitality under false pretences, for he was sure that if they knew what Stirling knew they would not have invited him. The doctor said he needed a change of air, and that could be his excuse.

Then he read the invitation again and weakened. After all, why shouldn't he accept? Come to think of it, in Jack's last letter he had said that he wished Winthrop would spend graduation week at the Point, as he was sure that his old room-mate had enough friends in the Corps to make his stay a pleasant one. If Jack thought him worthy to go back to the Point on a visit, he

would also think him worthy of attending the furlough dinner, especially now that the whole class, with but two exceptions, had extended the invitation. So, fortifying himself with yet another perusal of the note, already grown flimsy from much reading, Winthrop determined to accept their hospitality.

As class secretary, Raymond had written the invitation. It was a typical boy's letter, hearty and running over with good wishes for Winthrop's speedy recovery, and further characterized by a masculine aversion for heroics or sentiment of any kind. In fact, there was no reference made to the accident, beyond Raymond saying that the class regretted Winthrop was laid up for repairs, and that it hoped he would be well enough to join them at the furlough dinner on June fourteenth.

After deciding to accept the invitation, Winthrop lay for a long time staring up at the bare ceiling above his bandaged head, and his thoughts must have been very pleasant to judge from his expression. At last he rang for the nurse.

White-capped and smiling she appeared.

Winthrop smiled back at her.

"I want to write a letter," he began.

"You mean you want me to write it for you,"

she returned, her wholesome middle-aged face beaming with good humour.

Winthrop twisted his unbandaged right hand around tentatively.

"No, I think I can do it myself," he answered, and then for fear she would think him ungrateful: "You see, it's in answer to a letter from my class at West Point asking me to the furlough dinner and —"

"And you think they'd rather have a personal letter than a dictated one," she finished comfortably.

Winthrop nodded, and the nurse, after poking his pillows into shape, taking his temperature and writing down some cabalistic things on a chart by the door, went after the writing materials.

It was the first day her patient had been quite rational, and she was so delighted that she stopped at the doctor's office to report the improvement.

"Too bad the Secretary had to leave before the boy recognized him," he commented. "If his temperature doesn't rise again this afternoon I'll telegraph his father, and perhaps the old gentleman can run up for a few hours to-morrow or the next day."

"How proud he is of the boy's heroism," the nurse said as she started to leave the room.

"Well, he ought to be," snapped the doctor. "It was the nerviest thing I ever heard of, and there's some talk, I believe, of getting young Winthrop a medal for bravery."

The nurse thought of this as she adjusted the table by Winthrop's bed and laid out the writing materials. Then she left the room, feeling that he would prefer to be alone.

Painfully the boy wrote his acceptance, and just as he signed it with a feeble attempt at the old flourishing signature, Miss Porter reappeared, a large bundle of mail in her hands.

"It has been accumulating for the last ten days," she explained, "but until this morning the doctor thought best not to let you have it."

Winthrop looked at the date of the letter on the bed.

"Why, this was written yesterday," he said. Miss Porter smiled.

"That letter was delivered to you through a mistake in the office," she replied, "but it seems to have had such a tonic effect that I got the doctor's permission to give you an even larger dose."

Winthrop reached out a thin hand for the bundle.

"Where are they from?" he asked almost childishly.

The nurse ran an eye over the different postmarks.

"Out of the twenty letters there are, let me see, two, four, six, eight, nine, *ten* from West Point," she laughed.

Winthrop started to reach out both eager hands, but a sudden twitch in the bandaged left arm reminded him and, weakly, he sank back again upon his pillows.

Oh, the dear, dear fellows! How good they were to him. How good! For a few moments he lay there, studying the postmarks and trying to puzzle out the handwriting on the different envelopes. This fat letter addressed in a round boyish hand was from Jack, of course; that beautifully written one could be from Raymond only; that awkward scrawl was Bayard's; that affected angular hand, Lampton's.

The nurse watched the boy and smiled at his eagerness.

"Shall I open the letters for you?" she suggested.

Winthrop shook his head.

"No, thank you, it will make them last longer to do it myself," and balancing the thickest letter against his bandaged arm he opened it neatly with a penknife.

Miss Porter moved about the room in her noiseless way, making it even more orderly with a deft touch here and there. The one white-curtained window was open, for though it was only the first week in March the sun and air were caressingly soft. An indescribable earthy smell pervaded everything, and there was a faint suggestion of green in the limited bit of grass bordering the area, while the deceitful buds of the elm trees looked as if ready to burst into bloom. Far down the street a huckster was crying his wares, and as she stood beside the window, Miss Porter was sure that the bit of blue sky she could just make out above the housetops smiled in benediction.

A sudden gasp from the bed startled her. She turned quickly and saw that Winthrop had thrown one letter down and was painfully opening another. After a quick look at its contents he tossed that aside for a third; this in turn was discarded for a fourth letter, which was on such thick paper

that in order to open it he tore at the envelope with his teeth in a perfect frenzy of haste.

The nurse hurried to his side.

"Mr. Winthrop," she protested, "Mr. Winthrop, sir!"

At the voice of authority Winthrop looked up. There were two red spots on either cheek and his breath came hard.

"Tell me," he gasped, "what did the papers say about my accident?"

The nurse stared.

"Why, nothing you could possibly object to, Mr. Winthrop," she returned soothingly. "In fact they were all very complimentary."

Winthrop clenched his teeth hard.

"But what did they say?" he insisted.

Up to that time, even in his lucid moments, the boy had not shown the slightest interest in the matter beyond asking if the old woman had been hurt. Reassured on that point he had let the subject drop. Now he seemed to fear he had not been given due credit for his bravery, and Miss Porter felt a sense of disappointment that made her voice cold as she replied:

"Really I can't remember what the papers did say, Mr. Winthrop, except that you saved

the woman's life at great risk to your own, that you were very cool about it, and that West Point was to be congratulated on producing men like you."

The colour in Winthrop's face flamed higher than ever, and the nurse in Miss Porter predominated over the woman.

" When you get a bit stronger you can read the papers for yourself," she said in her professionally bright voice, " and meanwhile I'm going to clear up these letters and make the room presentable for the doctor's afternoon visit."

Winthrop watched her unseeingly with eyes grown suddenly hard.

" Shall I fold the note you've written to the class and address it for you? " she asked presently.

Her patient shook his bandaged head.

" I — I've changed my mind about accepting the invitation," he answered dully. " To-morrow perhaps I'll feel more like writing my regrets."

Miss Porter looked at Winthrop keenly, then gave him the thermometer to " smoke," as she continued her work of gathering up the scattered papers.

That evening she was relieved by another nurse,

and the next week on reporting for duty, refreshed from her short vacation, she was delighted to find Winthrop quite himself again, his temperature normal, his eyes bright and clear.

"I'm going to ask you to write a letter for me to-day," he began on seeing her.

Miss Porter acquiesced briefly, but was filled with a not unpardonable curiosity when a few hours later she started this epistle at Winthrop's dictation:

"My dear Raymond: — As class secretary I write you this, knowing you will see that the others hear my reason for not accepting their kind invitation to the class dinner on June 14th. By chance I received the invitation before the personal letters that had preceded it, and I was so delighted you all wanted me that I most broke my neck to say 'Yes.'

"Then the other letters came, showing you'd invited me under the misapprehension that I'd done something heroic the day of my accident."

Miss Porter looked up quickly from her writing, but Winthrop, lying back with his eyes closed, went on quietly:

" I feel like a simpleton, old man, and don't quite know how to tell you what a fluke the whole business was. You see, the newspaper chaps got it into their silly heads that I did something or other heroic, when the whole truth of the matter is I hadn't an idea there was a runaway, and simply knocked the old woman from under the horse's feet by accident."

Miss Porter, conscious that Winthrop had opened his eyes and was looking at her, repressed a start of amazement and waited quietly for his next words.

" I was leaving that afternoon for Washington, and in my hurry to catch a cross-town car to the ferry, I tore around the corner of Broadway and Twenty-ninth street, only half conscious that the crowd was bigger than usual and the noise more over-powering. Fighting my way to the curb, I started across the street and in my awkwardness bumped against an old woman coming towards me. As she fell, she caught hold of my arm and I went down, too, with a hansom cab almost on top of us both.

" Well, the next thing I knew I woke up in the hospital, and asked if the woman had been hurt.

They said not a bit, so I rested peacefully in that thought till I read your letters and learned that for ten days I had been posing as a hero, when I was nothing more than an awkward lout.

"For the last week I've been trying to get the papers to print the true version of the story in as prominent a place as they printed the other rot, but with the exception of a signed letter tucked out of sight somewhere in their columns, they have done nothing, one of the editors even writing back to accuse me of self-consciousness by saying that the public had forgotten all about the incident anyway, and that there was no need of re-opening it.

"As the papers won't help me out in the predicament, my only recourse is to write those whose opinion I really value and tell them the truth. I'm sorry I'm not the hero my friends would have me, but at least I'm glad they thought me capable of the heroic deed.

"Good bye, dear old Raymond, and please thank the class not only for the invitation, but for its kind thought of me."

As Winthrop signed the letter, Miss Porter looked at him with a new respect in her eyes, for

she had lived long enough to know that writing such an explanation had taken even more courage than would have been required to save the beggar's life that afternoon on Broadway.

Something of the kind must also have occurred to his friends at West Point, for the very next day Winthrop received a special delivery letter which turned out to be another invitation to the furlough dinner, and this time it was signed by Riggs and Gronna in addition to the rest of the class.

"A man that would get down from a pedestal as well made as that Winthrop was on, must be the soul of honour," Riggs had said, looking up from a second perusal of Winthrop's letter. "And he doesn't write as if he'd just discovered the Ten Commandments and wanted to tell you all about 'em, either. He's the sort of chap West Point might well be proud of, and I'm only sorry that circumstances didn't permit his graduating with the class."

"And what about that affair last summer?" Gronna had suggested.

"Well, we were mistaken, Sorrel-top, that's all. A man who could act as Winthrop has, is white all through. He simply couldn't be guilty

of anything underhanded. Why, what he's just done is worthy of — "

"Of Bayard himself," finished Gronna laughing, and then he suggested that they write a joint letter to Winthrop, apologizing for their unjust suspicions in the past.

This they would have done but for Stirling, who advised them to let well enough alone. So they contented themselves with a friendly letter which spoke admiration from every line, and Winthrop read it with eyes that saw but dimly, rejoicing in his heart that he had not succumbed to the temptation which beset him sore that afternoon in the hospital.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

MEANWHILE at West Point the days marched along towards June in single file, so slowly at first that it seemed as if they were simply marking time from "Reveille" to "Taps." Then, of a sudden, they went by at a quickstep, this soon changing to double time, faster and faster, till Sunday morning inspections almost tripped each other up in their rapid succession. "Forward, double time, march!" the Year had commanded, and no laggard in his studies could call "Squad halt!" or order a backward movement to the rapidly passing regiment.

On March fifteenth the third class riding lessons gave way to mechanical and mathematical drawing, while company drills, so hard on every one after the long winter's confinement, were resumed. As happened each year, most of the men were thoroughly exhausted after these drills and found it hard to study at night, some of them even falling asleep over their books, while the few who kept awake were so worn out that the reading

of the lesson was purely mechanical and resulted in a confused jumble of words, that in one way or another seemed to straighten out over night into something resembling coherence; though as a rule, spring brought with it a general lowering of grades, and this despite the fact that the lessons were shortened with the coming in of drills.

In the same way the delinquency list grew with the approach of June, and spring fights were as contagious as spring fevers, while even the least imaginative soul in the first or third class was apt to let thoughts of coming graduation or furlough interfere with military duties, and from the pages of his open book would find himself looking at visions of home, rather than the daily lesson.

Early in April, artillery drills began and detachments of the third class were put in charge of plebes at siege drill, while the light battery manœuvres on the plain were not to be despised, unless, indeed, a hard hearted battery commander made them trot beside their pieces and caissons when they might have been seated thereon.

In May battalion drills, perhaps the most exhausting work of all, supplanted artillery practice. In addition to this the furloughmen tramped miles around the post and up into the hills every

afternoon, putting their theoretical knowledge of surveying to practical account. This meant that they had to be on their feet continuously from two o'clock until the supper hour, no mean achievement in those first warm, debilitating days of early spring.

Meanwhile in Mathematics they had taken up Integral Calculus, the direct opposite of what they had been studying for nearly two months, and few among them but found it hard to scientifically untangle the complicated mathematical web they had been weaving so long. As for drawing, they had accomplished incredible things therein, what with patience, good instruments, and the best of instruction, and when they once began to put their knowledge into practice they realized how indispensable it would be in their future campaigning, and worked the harder because of this realization.

Also most of the class had found that many things which looked impossible at first had yielded to hard study, and as they came to their last advanced lessons in Mathematics, they could not but realize that they had reached the top of the course after two long years of work, and it filled them with a satisfaction that even the

coming June examinations could not entirely dampen.

Then, too, class feeling had grown, and friendships that were destined to last a man through life had sprung up, for in the whole class there was hardly a fellow not on terms of brotherly intimacy with all the others. Nor was it strange, considering that their studies, habits of life, and surroundings were the same, as were also their hopes and fears and ambitions.

To be sure, there were many who would never get used to the military discipline, nor what they were pleased to characterize as "the grinding, intolerable life" of the place. Neither were they liable to leave West Point with regret on graduation, but at least the home letters, when compared with those first written from the Academy, indicated a great change of feeling in regard to the life there, while few among the cadets but felt they would enter the service two years hence did the Academic Board not prove over belligerent the while.

The year had also brought about a revolution in their social positions, and given them a better insight into the real West Point, so that nothing would have induced the average fellow voluntarily

to give up his cadetship, for as men found deficient at West Point and discharged from there will testify, the change back to civilian life, after a year or two of military discipline, is almost as awkward as is the primal transformation from citizen to soldier.

Early in May the class began to hold Saturday night furlough meetings in the Dialectic Hall, where they discussed plans for the coming summer; amicably wrangled over which New York hotel should have their patronage for the furlough dinner; or which route different ones would take going North, East, South, or West.

Other evenings on release from quarters, they gathered at Battery Knox to sing class songs and watch the river steamers coming and going, with here and there a clumsy canal boat towed by a little tug, or again somebody's yacht or sailboat drifting lazily by.

Although many of the voices might have lacked training, the general effect was so good that even a Lorelei might well have stopped her own siren song to listen, and over on Professors' Row gray-headed men heard the fresh young voices and remembered the approach of their own furlough many years before. So when "Recall"

put an end to the singing, and the furloughmen trooped back to barracks, many a householder on the Point found himself reminiscently whistling "Benny Havens, Oh," the while he gazed out into the fragrant dusk, a thousand memories tugging at his heart strings as in barracks a thousand anticipations quickened the pulse of every man with furlough ahead of him.

On the thirty-first of May the last recitations for the year were held, and at "Reveille" next morning the Corps appeared in white trousers for the first time since October, this being the signal that the hundred days to June had really passed, for rose-crowned and smiling, the gala hour of the cadet year was at hand.

With mimic warfare and anything but mimic work in the examinations, the Corps passed a bewildering fortnight. There were innumerable parades, reviews, and exhibition drills, the men being under arms and in ranks hours at a time, either marching or standing rigidly at attention, picturesque and hot in their heavy dress-coats, but so happy the long year was over that nobody complained, even when the Commandant made them double time for the distinguished visitors.

There were dashing cavalry and artillery drills

on the plain; riding exhibitions in the hall; firing by the heavy sea-coast guns at old Target Hill across the river; pontoon bridge building; and, prettiest of all, the battalion skirmish drill when the cadets ran their skirmish lines in every direction while they kept up a roar of musketry, the white smoke rolling over the plain from the cracking rifles. Finally the gray-coated figures swept down on the visitors' seats in a dead run and captured their friends, the enemy, with small loss; as those who fell in battle promptly came to life after the line had passed, and running to the extreme left or right prepared to defend their country once again, and if needs be, die again for it, too.

Finally on the last night before graduation the old mortars were fired, some fancy shells being introduced, and when six of these shells burst in the air at the same moment, sending showers and sparks in every direction, they made the most beautiful fire-works imaginable.

The next morning after the final review and graduation ceremonies, the Corps assembled in front of barracks to hear the cadet adjutant read the " makes " of the year, and not a man there but felt his heart beat more rapidly as the newly

appointed officer, wearing his gray uniform for the last time, read the special orders aloud.

There were the usual surprises and disappointments in the bestowal of chevrons; the usual heart burnings and rejoicings. As every one hoped and expected, popular Bob Graham was made first captain, while Jack Stirling stepped into his shoes as sergeant-major, Raymond and Bayard getting the chevrons next in importance, and this year nobody was surprised at Raymond's luck, it having been a foregone conclusion that he would succeed Connelly as ranking first sergeant.

In the new yearling class, little Tim Croghan carried off the honours as first corporal, which was almost the cause of his death by strangulation the moment ranks broke, both Stirling and Raymond falling upon him in a perfect frenzy of congratulation before they tore up to their rooms to get into their civilian clothes.

"Maybe you won't go out into the wilds this summer and practice rattling off the names in the company, Mr. First Sergeant Raymond," teased Stirling as he threw the last few things into his trunk.

And maybe you won't enjoy being sergeant-major next year," retorted Raymond.

"My! But how we used to look up to the first sergeant and sergeant-major when we were plebes, do you remember, Mizzoo?"

Did he remember! Raymond lifted shining eyes from the trunk he was strapping.

"Jack," he began, a little huskily, perhaps, "Jack, old man, if it hadn't been for you I'd have resigned that first year in barracks. Then I thought the whole business was bullying, pure and simple, now I realize it was discipline; while in the section room —"

"Well, in the section room I owe you more, Mizzoo, than you owe me, for if it hadn't been for you I'd have come out at least ten files lower than I did, and —"

"Hurry up there," called Riggs' voice at the door, "or you'll get a late at the dinner formation," and then in a lower tone:

"By all that's military, what have we here?"

Jack and Raymond looked up quickly to see Bartholomew Bayard standing in the doorway, a hand on Riggs' shoulder. And what a changed Bayard from the awkward country boy of two years before! Now, dressed in an inexpensive but well cut sack suit, with irreproachable shoes, tie, and derby, he could have passed muster any-

where, and although he still had the habit of blushing furiously, it was not accompanied by a depression of the chest or averted eyes. Instead he looked one squarely in the face, sure of his welcome.

"Why, Chevalier, you've ragged it regardless," commented Stirling admiringly. "Turn around and let's have a look at the back. Whew! It's ripping, man!"

"Is it?" exclaimed Bayard apprehensively. And then with a pleased grin:

"Oh, you mean you like it? I'm so glad, Stirling. I was almost afraid to trust the tailor, he was so much cheaper than the others."

"He was?" demanded Riggs incredulously. "Well, there's a set to those shoulders that suits me to the ground. Tell your tailor it's little Riggs for him at graduation."

Bayard was in a transport of delight at his friends' approval, as arm in arm they followed the battalion to the Mess Hall. There they were joined by Gronna, who sported an outfit evidently copied from the one Winthrop had worn on reporting, although Gronna's tie was so nearly the colour of his hair that it aroused much good-

natured chaffing at his expense, and enlivened the dinner hour not a little.

Before the battalion was half through eating, the furloughmen were going from table to table in an ecstasy of leave-taking, but finally the last hand was shaken, the last good bye said, and the happy fellows were swinging down the long hill to the station.

Their first two years at West Point were over, the years principally devoted to teaching obedience, a most necessary lesson for men who in turn were to command. They had also learned what leads to sovereign power, "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control." In addition, the most careless among them had acquired habits of personal neatness and could keep his clothing, quarters, books, and arms in the best possible condition. Promptness was also theirs by virtue of numberless roll calls a day, and in the section-room and at drills they had learned to do their full duty or suffer the consequences.

In almost every instance the physical condition had kept pace with the mental, and the eighty young men remaining in the class would have served as examples of the survival of the fittest, for the indolent, the time-serving, the unscrupu-

lous, the low-minded, and the dishonourable had been eliminated from their midst long before. Well set-up, mentally, morally, and physically, clear-eyed and clear-brained, the furloughmen returned home after their long absence, a trifle ignorant, no doubt, of the world at large because of their highly specialized training, but well instructed in those things that serve to make the world a better place.

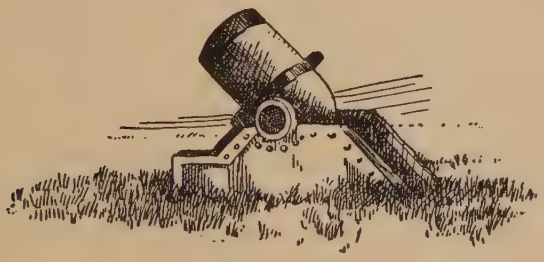
What a happy, rollicking, noisy lot they were as the boat drew up to the pier. How they yelled and shouted and cheered when the gangplank was finally let down and they streamed aboard, not in the orderly fashion they had been taught, but scuffling and falling over one another, each anxious to be the first to shake the dust of the place from his feet. No need for officious attendants to shout the obnoxious " Step lively, please! " to furloughman or graduate, the former, especially, pushing and shoving and treading on each other's heels in their eagerness to get aboard.

Some of them even disdained the aid of the gangway and, to the huge disgust of those in charge, leaped over the railing, while on every side could be heard mock commands from whilom corporals, the gentle " Hep, Hep," of the two

previous summers, interspersed with entreaties to " Stop that shoving, you fellows back there! From the way you act, anybody'd think you were glad to leave the Point."

As impatient to be off as the furloughmen themselves, the day boat tugged at her hawsers. At last she started. The band struck up " Benny Havens, Oh," and furloughmen and graduates alike took up the glad refrain, while from Battery Knox a group of newly made yearlings and first classmen joined the chorus with improvised megaphones, caps and handkerchiefs waving lustily until a bend in the river hid the boat from sight.

THE END.



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